

A PHENOMENOLOGICAL EXPLORATION OF THE DOMAIN  
AND STRUCTURE OF INTERNAL MARKETING

UCHENNA PASCHAL ANOSIKE.  
M. A. MANAGEMENT

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## **Abstract**

Despite the fact that Internal Marketing (IM) has emerged to capture the interest of academic researchers and management practitioners, there is a surprising absence of empirical study investigating how IM is experienced in the world of practice. This constitutes an impediment to bridging the gap in the holistic understanding of the IM concept. The big question that remains is how to articulate precisely those activities that can be taken to constitute the structure of IM and those that do not. This study aims to bridge this gap by exploring whether the experiences of managers who are implementing IM in their organisations could provide clarity as to the meaning and the constituents structure of IM.

This study first undertakes scrutiny of the extant IM literature in an attempt to clarify the multiplicity of terms often associated with IM. The meaning and the constituents structure of IM was investigated via an in-depth qualitative study guided by the principles of phenomenology. This qualitative study is based around open-ended interviews with participants sampled from the UK private and public sector firms. Data was collected and analysed in line with Giorgi's descriptive phenomenological research praxis. The phenomenological findings indicate nine overlapping elements, namely, internal communication, employee training, reward, empowerment, employee motivation, interdepartmental co-ordination, understanding the organisation, commitment, and top management support that emerged to constitute the experiential structure of IM. Drawing upon these elements, the study offers a conceptual framework of the IM structure. Systematic analytical steps were utilised to ensure the validity of findings.

## Table of contents

Abstract	ii
Table of Contents	iii
List of Tables	vii
List of Figures	viii
List of Appendixes	ix
Acknowledgements	x

## Chapter One Background and Thesis Overview 1

1.0 Background to the thesis	1
1.1 Why phenomenology as the focus of methodological exploration	7
1.2 The multiplicity of concepts associated with IM	9
1.3 Commentary on extant IM definitions and measurements studies	10
1.4 Organisation of the thesis	11
1.5 Summary	12

**Chapter Two Examination of the Multiplicity of Terms Associated with the IM Concept** 13

2.0 Overview	13
2.1 An introduction to internal marketing	13
2.2 The theoretical confusion surrounding the notion of IM	19
2.3 IM and the logic of internal market exchange	20
2.3.1 Employee as internal customer versus employee as customer	22
2.4 IM as management philosophy	25
2.5 IM and the challenge of business relationships management	29
2.6 IM and the cross-functional process of alignment	32
2.7 IM and the challenge of integration	35
2.7.1 IM and the challenge of socio-cultural integration	39
2.7.2 IM and the challenge of emotional integration	43
2.8 Review of existing IM definitions	49
2.9 IM measurement: critical examination of key empirical studies and their operationalisation of IM	61
2.9.1 Empirical studies and their IM operationalisation	62
2.10 Ahmed <i>et al.</i> , (2003) and the IM Mix – <i>Summary of study</i>	64
2.10.1 Issues arising from Ahmed <i>et al.</i> , (2003) IM Mix	65
2.11 Lings (2004) and his IM Operationalisation - <i>Summary of study</i>	68
2.11.1 Issues arising from the IMO construct articulated by Lings (2004)	69
2.12 Gounaris (2006; 2008) and his IM Operationalisation – <i>Summary of study</i>	73
2.12.1 Issues arising from Gounaris (2006; 2008) and his IMO construct	74

2.13 Competing Schools of thought in IM	83
2.13.1 Discussion of the various IM themes as contained in diagram 2.3	84
2.13.2 IM as interactive marketing and relational networks	84
2.13.3 Employee job satisfaction and internal market research and exchange	86
2.13.4 Integration and co-ordination, alignment & change mechanism	88
2.13.5 Employee as internal customer and internal market exchange	90
2.13.6 Employee attraction and retention	92
2.13.7 Employee empowerment, reward, employee training and motivation	93
2.14 Research aims and questions	96
2.15 Summary	98

### **Chapter Three The Methodological Philosophy of the current thesis** 99

3.0 Overview	99
3.1 Origins and the philosophy of phenomenology	100
3.2 Towards phenomenology as a qualitative research method	107
3.2.1 <i>Epoche</i> ’ or Bracketing	108
3.2.2 Phenomenological reduction	110
3.2.3 Free imaginative variation	113
3.3 The process of phenomenological research method	114
3.3.1 Data collection	120
3.3.2 The reading of the data	120
3.3.3 The dividing of the data into parts	120
3.3.4 Organisation and expression of raw data into one’s disciplinary language	122
3.3.5 Expressing the structure of the phenomenon	122
3.4 Critique of qualitative research	124
3.4.1 Validity and reliability in quantitative research	126
3.4.2 Validity and reliability in qualitative research	128
3.5 Towards the validity of descriptive phenomenological research method	140
3.6 Understanding the ecological validity of the current study	144
3.6.1 Utrecht School	144
3.6.2 Duquesne School	148
3.6.3 Van Kaam (1969)	151
3.6.4 Colaizzi (1978)	155
3.7 Towards establishing the validity and the reliability of the current study	159
3.8 Summary	164

### **Chapter Four Research Method of Study** 165

4.0 Overview	165
4.1 Towards phenomenology in the domain field of study	165
4.1.1 Phenomenology in organisational and management research	168
4.2 The rationale for the utility of phenomenology in this study	171

4.3 The sampling process	178
4.3.1 Access to the selected participants	179
4.3.2 Participants' selection and technique	181
4.4 The data collection process	187
4.5 The interview process	188
4.6 Pilot Study	191
4.7 Method of self reflection	195
4.8 Summary	198
 <b>Chapter Five The Analysis of Study</b>	 199
5.0 Overview	199
5.1 The process of this study's phenomenological analysis	199
5.2 Data analysis	202
5.2.1 Reading to get a sense of the whole	202
5.2.2 The analysis leading to determination of meaning units	203
5.2.3 Analytical transformation of meaning units into disciplinary expressions	205
5.2.4 The analysis leading to the determination of the structure of IM.	208
5.2.5 The analysis leading to the synthesis of the transformed meaning units	211
5.2.6 The analysis leading to the description of IM at the general level	214
5.3 The phenomenological findings- an outline	215
5.3.1 Internal communication	220
5.3.2 Employee training	223
5.3.3 Top management support	224
5.3.4 Commitment	226
5.3.5 Rewards	228
5.3.6 Interdepartmental co-ordination	230
5.3.7 Empowerment	231
5.3.8 Employee motivation	233
5.3.9 Understanding the organisation	235
5.4 Summary	237
 <b>Chapter Six General Consideration of Exploratory Findings and Discussions</b>	 238
6.0 Overview	238
6.1 Internal communication	238
6.2 Employee training	246
6.3 Top management support	252
6.4 Commitment	256
6.4.1 Affective or attitudinal commitment	263
6.4.2 Normative commitment	264
6.4.3 Continuance or calculative commitment	265

6.5 Reward	267
6.6 Interdepartmental co-ordination	273
6.7 Empowerment	278
6.8 Employee motivation	286
6.9 Understanding the Organisation (Cross-functional integration)	289
6.10 Synthesis of the main experiential IM dynamics	294
6.10.1 Internal communication	294
6.10.2 Employee training	296
6.10.3 Top management support	297
6.10.4 Reward	298
6.10.5 Inter-departmental co-ordination	299
6.10.6 Empowerment	299
6.10.7 Employee motivation	300
6.10.8 Understanding the organisation	301
6.11 Summary	304
 <b>Chapter Seven Concluding Discussions</b>	 305
7.0 Overview	305
7.1 Overview of aims and objectives of this study	305
7.2 The contributions of this study	306
7.3 Specific contributions from the utility of descriptive phenomenology	306
7.3.1 IM focus on rewards	308
7.3.2 IM focus on employee training	309
7.3.3 IM focus on management support	310
7.3.4 IM focus on employee commitment	311
7.3.5 IM focus on empowerment & motivation	311
7.4 Broad contributions from the utility of descriptive phenomenology	312
7.5 Contributions in relation to the wider body of knowledge to which IM relates	314
7.6 Academic and practice implications	318
7.7 Limitations of this study	320
7.7.1 Methodological considerations	320
7.7.2 Generalisation of the study's findings	321
7.8 Recommendations for future research	322
7.9 Concluding remarks	324
 <b>Bibliography</b>	 326

## **List of Tables**

Table 2.1 Extant IM studies stressing very different notions and definitions of IM and nature of study	57
Table 3.1 Summary of characteristics of three phenomenological research methods of the Duquesne School	157
Table 3.2 A comparative summary of the characteristics of the Utrecht School and the Duquesne School of thought	159
Table 4.1 Characteristics of participants for the main study	183
Table 4.1a Characteristics of P1	183
Table 4.1b Characteristics of P2	184
Table 4.1c Characteristics of P3	184
Table 4.1d Characteristics of P4	185
Table 4.1e Characteristics of P5	185
Table 4.1f Characteristics of P6	186
Table 4.1g Characteristics of P7	186
Table 4.1h Characteristics of P8	187
Table 4.2 Characteristics of participants for the pilot study	195

## **List of Diagrams**

Diagram 2.1	IMO articulated by Gounaris (2006)	81
Diagram 2.2	Behavioural dimensions of internal market orientation and the activities that typify them	82
Diagram 2.3	Competing Schools of thought in IM	83
Diagram 5.1	The descriptive phenomenological analytical chart	201
Diagram 5.2	Invariant features of IM with source	217
Diagram 5.2a	The element of internal communication and source	217
Diagram 5.2b	The element of top-management support and source	217
Diagram 5.2c	The element of employee training and source	218
Diagram 5.2d	The element of commitment and source	218
Diagram 5.2e	The element of reward and source	218
Diagram 5.2f	The element of interdepartmental co-ordination and source	218
Diagram 5.2g	The element of empowerment and source	219
Diagram 5.2h	The element of employee motivation and source	219
Diagram 5.2i	The element of understanding the organisation and source	219
Diagram 6.1	The Structure of IM	303



## List of Appendixes

Appendix One	“ <i>Lebenswelt</i> ” or the ‘life world’	353
Appendix Two	Steps in the analysis of transformed meaning units into disciplinary language – Participant 1	356
Appendix Three	Steps in the analysis of transformed meaning units into disciplinary language – Participant 2	362
Appendix Four	Steps in the analysis of determining IM structure from steps 2 and Steps 3 above (Participant 1)	364
Appendix Five	Steps in the analysis of determining IM structure from steps 2 and Steps 3 above (Participant 2)	370
Appendix Six	Exact transcribed interview protocol for P1	372
Appendix Seven	Exact transcribed interview protocol for P2	376
Appendix Eight	Excerpts from the transcribed interview protocol for P3	378
Appendix Nine	Excerpts from the transcribed interview protocol for P4	381
Appendix Ten	Excerpts from the transcribed interview protocol for P5	383
Appendix Eleven	Excerpts from the transcribed interview protocol for P6	385
Appendix Twelve	Excerpts from the transcribed interview protocol for P7	387
Appendix Thirteen	Excerpts from the transcribed interview protocol for P8	390

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## Chapter One

### Background and thesis overview

#### 1.0 Background to the thesis

More than three decades after academic writers (e.g. [Sasser & Arbeit, 1976](#); [Berry, 1981; 1984](#)) described internal marketing (IM) as selling jobs as products to the employees' market, i.e. the organisation, its constituent structure has yet to receive serious investigation. Although there have been welcome attempts (e.g. [Berry, 1981; 1984](#); [Gronroos, 1985](#); [Gumesson, 1987](#); [George, 1990](#); [Rafiq & Ahmed, 1993; 2000](#); [Varey, 1993b](#); [Hales, 1994](#); [Ballantyne, 1997; 2000b; 2003](#); [Varey & Lewis, 1999](#); [Conduit & Mavondo, 2001](#); [Schultz, 2002; 2004; 2006](#); [Ahmed & Rafiq, 2003](#); [Ahmed \*et al.\*, 2003](#); [Gounaris, 2006](#)) at presenting an understanding of the IM concept, such attempts, however, have only managed to fragment academic research in IM. Thus, this leads to a multiplicity of views and competing theoretical alternatives in its domain field.

For instance, [Sasser & Arbeit \(1976\)](#) draw a parallel between external marketing and the IM concept, and argue that IM involves the exchange of values between the employee and the employer. In their view, the organisation should market its jobs to employees in order to be able to sell its products and services to its external customers. In clarifying the above notion, [Berry \(1981; 1984\)](#) suggests that whilst external customers exchange economic resources e.g. money, for goods and services, employees exchange human resources e.g. skills, time, and energy, for jobs that provide economic resources, say, in the form of remuneration. [Berry's](#) view stems mainly from the idea of internal exchange logic. Internal exchange logic is underpinned by the notion that the

nature of exchange relationship that exists between the employee and the organisation is not different from the exchange relationship that exists between the organisation and the external customers. Collins & Payne (1991) believe that IM is concerned with the management of human resources from a marketing perspective i.e. a form of marketing in which both the 'customer' and the 'supplier' are inside the organisation. Critics (e.g. Hales, 1994) however, have argued that IM has no such implications for human resource management (HRM). According to Piercy (1995; 1996), IM is an operational approach to creating a balance between the needs of both the 'internal' and the 'external' customers.

Although Gumesson (1987) supports the notion of the 'internal customer' as implied above, he identifies that IM serves as the integrating mechanism that transports external marketing activities to the internal market of employees in order to achieve overall customer satisfaction. Gronroos (1985) identifies that IM involves the use of marketing-like techniques internally, which can be useful in motivating employees towards customer-consciousness and sales-mindedness. Hales (1994) contends that such marketing-like techniques are advertising and promotional selling points used to manipulate and relegate employee action. Whilst recognising IM as the use of marketing-like activities internally, Rafiq & Ahmed (1993) maintain that IM is a mechanism for aligning, and integrating individuals with the effective implementation of corporate strategies, as well as overcoming resistance to change in a wide range of organisational contexts. The alignment mechanism with IM, as Ahmed & Rafiq (2003) later emphasize, implies that IM generates involvement and employee commitment to organisational programmes.

IM is believed to engender employee commitment through internal exchanges of value and symbols through effective communication between the organisation and its employee groups, which is a prerequisite for successful exchanges with external markets (George, 1990). This implies that IM includes actions and managerial directions an organisation implements in order to encourage and generate employees and other stakeholder support for organisational programmes and processes (Schultz, 2004). De Bussy *et al.*, (2003) suggest that IM harnesses stakeholder needs in a way that such needs are reflected in the exchange relationships that go on within the organisation. In a case study of Australian bank employees, Ballantyne (1997; 2000b) found that IM is a mechanism used by employees to build and develop internal network of exchange relationships for the purpose of knowledge renewal. Recent studies (e.g. Lings, 2004; Gounaris, 2006) in IM suggest that internal market orientation (IMO) is an IM measurement construct used to build effective relationships between employees and the organisation.

The foregoing, which constitute the key competing academic debates in the domain field of IM, accords primacy to the employee market whilst viewing IM as a co-ordinating strategy used to create high performance work systems in order to generate both employees and other stakeholder support for organisational goals. This raises the spectre of relevance and validity, given that the above-mentioned studies have largely ignored how IM is experienced in the world of practice. There is currently no systematic or rigorous investigation as to how IM occurs and/or is experienced by managers who are attempting to implement it within their workplace. If anything, there is yet to be evolved a clear understanding of the abstract and often ambiguous language of academic theorists in this field of study.

Echoing the above view in a guest editorial to the *European Journal of Marketing*, Ahmed & Rafiq (2003, p.1169) emphasize that this gap illustrates the “dearth of academic research” in IM domain, as Schultz (2006) subsequently corroborates. Schultz (2006, p.6) stresses the need to evolve an “inclusive and holistic” understanding of the structure of the IM concept by incorporating the “voice” of practitioners. Therefore, this study attempts to fill this void by exploring the phenomenon of IM as experienced by practitioners who are attempting to implement it in their world of work. The current state of academic research in IM can best be summarised, “there is a great deal of confusion in the literature as to exactly what IM is, what it is supposed to do, how it is supposed to do it, and who is supposed to do it” (Rafiq & Ahmed, 2000, p.449). Thus, it is not surprising as to why critics, such as Hales (1994), attack IM strongly, especially, from the perspective of other organisational concepts such as human resources management (HRM) with which it shares association.

However, Ahmed & Rafiq (2003, p.1169-70) raise four areas of concern that explain the gap in the current understanding of IM:

- a) There is still considerable debate as to what constitutes IM, how it should be operationised as a pragmatic managerial intervention and how it should be operationalised in academic terms for rigorous scrutiny and investigation.
- b) Most of the research in IM, with a few exceptions, has focused on simply assessing the adoption of IM, rather than investigating its effectiveness or operationalisation. In other words, there is a paucity of rich case-based evidence and even more acute shortfall of the more rigorous empirically-based investigations.
- c) There is still little consideration of how IM fits in with macro-programmes of organisational intervention and strategic context. For instance, how does IM aid organisational effectiveness, what is its impact on business performance, and how does IM dovetail with other initiatives of corporate transformation and success?

- d) The cross-functional nature of IM makes it a difficult area to research, as it requires knowledge not only of marketing but also of human resources management and other disciplines that affect marketing strategies.

It is precisely with the first and last areas of concern in mind that my study situates its task of exploring how IM as developed by academics is understood and experienced by managers attempting to apply it in their organisations. However, it would be impossible to achieve such an aim by simply following preconceived starting points, which have tended to assess the IM concept from purely quantitative and academic lens. Previous IM studies (e.g. Gounaris, 2006) that follow such preconceptions have yet to grasp fully the significance of the underlying issues confronting research approach in IM. In most cases, such attempts, because of a lack of clarification confuse and add further ambiguity to theoretical terms associated with IM. Ahmed & Rafiq (2003) and Schultz (2006) call for entirely new direction, an unpretentious and radical reconsideration of the methodological approach to IM research.

In stark terms, in order to understand how to conceptualise/operationalise as an IM empirical construct in academic terms but with organisational relevance, it necessary to focus attention on practitioners' perspectives based on their experiences of IM in their everyday organisational life. The clear absence of such an IM mandate is the cause of the schism increasingly displayed by academic researchers in the domain field of this study. Without much doubt, there is a lack of consensus amongst academic researchers in IM domain field. In a guest editorial to the *International Journal of Management Practice*, Ahmed (2004, p.1) laments the narrowly focused and burgeoning number of unsophisticated academic theories which are "less and less useful in solving the everyday problems of managers and employees in organisations."

A far more important concern relates to the research approaches used in most IM investigations. Whilst it is fair to acknowledge that research approaches in extant IM studies are rich and varied, however, no study thus far has examined the phenomenology of IM, or the manner in which practitioners implementing IM experience it in their everyday organisational life. Surprisingly, phenomenology investigation to clarify the domain of IM has not been utilised. It is exactly at this seemingly intractable juncture that my study offers a completely new direction, as [Ahmed & Rafiq \(2003\)](#) and [Schultz \(2006\)](#) demand. It employs the qualitative phenomenological research approach to investigate how practitioners experience and understand the IM phenomenon. Phenomenology, according to [Polkinghorne \(1989\)](#), seeks to reveal a phenomenon as it appears independent of and prior to any theoretical interpretation, scientific or otherwise.

The phenomenological research approach employed in this study seeks to describe the invariant features that emerge to constitute the structure of IM, as experienced and understood by those practitioners involved in IM implementation in their organisations. Without such empirical research input, continuing theoretical interventions in the domain field of IM will remain just that; theory, without any profound impact on organisational life. The phenomenological frame employed also situates itself precisely within the recent call by some eminent scholars ([e.g. Ehrich, 2005](#)) in management research. They advocate the need to explore phenomenology as an alternative research approach to providing new insights and knowledge in management research. Therefore, the rationale for the current study sits at ease with the following key objectives:



- 1) Methodological exploration, particularly the utility of descriptive phenomenological research approach to investigate how IM is experienced in the world of practice.
- 2) Examination of the multiplicity and the often-misunderstood theoretical concepts closely associated with IM.
- 3) Commentary on extant IM definitions and key empirical studies in IM measurement with an aim towards providing insights for construct development.

Each objective is addressed in full in the subsequent chapters within this study. However, the rationale behind these objectives is outlined below, followed by the structure of this study.

### **1.1. Why phenomenology as the focus of methodological exploration?**

The complete absence of phenomenology investigation in the field of IM is a clear manifestation of the lack of dialogue between existing research approaches in IM and other forms of established research approaches. Generally, the existing empirical research approach in the IM domain is guided predominantly by two standing assumptions. Firstly, that operationalising the IM concept via quantitative mechanisms and in purely academic terms would automatically facilitate a unified and common practitioner understanding of IM itself. Secondly, that simply adapting the external marketing constructs, such as, Market Orientation (MO) and Marketing Mix Elements to develop an IM measurement construct e.g. IM mix, and Internal Marketing Orientation (IMO), will provide the lens through which to establish the constituents structure of IM. Previous studies (e.g. [Ahmed \*et al.\*, 2003](#); [Lings, 2004](#); [Gounaris, 2006](#); [2008](#)) that follow such standing assumptions have shown inherent failures and inconsistencies in their theory construction and model development. [Rafiq & Ahmed \(2000, p.450\)](#) recognise this view and remark that “What is required is a precise

specification of those activities that can be taken to constitute IM and those that do not.”

Unfortunately, academic theorists who lack deep understanding of the meaning and essence of IM in relation to how practitioners perceive it have tended to pursue the above view rather narrowly. For example, in positing IM as a purely abstract and theoretical phenomenon, previous empirical studies (e.g. [Lings 2004](#); [Gounaris, 2006](#)) in IM that strictly follow the quantitative research approach tend to ignore the salient issues facing academic research in the field, such as incorporating practitioners’ perceptions of IM. This is not to suggest that the quantitative mechanism represents a less than meaningful research approach to IM investigation, but the majority of such quantitative studies (e.g. [Ahmed \*et al.\*, 2003](#)) have yet to bridge the rift between academic theorists in this field of study. Thus, quantitative studies (e.g. [Gounaris, 2006](#)) that have focused on establishing whether IM’s application in organisations was right or wrong have led to the abstract formalisations and fragmentation of IM research, with the consequent result “that there does not exist a single unified notion of what is meant by IM” ([Rafiq & Ahmed, 1993, p. 219](#)).

Indeed, a phenomenological research approach to IM investigation will add substantially to understanding of those activities that constitute the IM concept as well as contribute in clarifying its domain field. Exploring the nature of IM phenomenon through a phenomenological process is an attempt at evolving an IM structure that practitioners can easily relate to in their everyday organisational life. For instance, several studies (e.g. [Ahmed, 2004](#); [Schultz, 2004](#); [2006](#)) examining research in IM particularly highlight the lack of research in IM with practitioner focus. This in turn,

raises the question as to whether the academic community has developed a substantially deep insight into how practitioners experience IM in their world of work.

Therefore, the descriptive phenomenological process employed in this study promises to address the lack of practitioner ‘voice’ in IM research by attempting to specify the structure of IM based on the perspectives of practitioners whose everyday IM experiences are self-evident. Importantly, relating the phenomenological findings from the current study with the findings of other research approaches will show easily how the emergent invariant features of IM phenomenon sit with other empirical findings in existing IM studies with conventional research approaches.

## **1.2 The multiplicity of concepts associated with IM:**

IM was initially proposed as an approach to services marketing management that involves the application of the external marketing concepts within the organisation aimed at improving individual capabilities and internal market exchange relationships, which ultimately, leads to organisational effectiveness (Berry, 1981; Gronroos, 1981; Gummesson, 1987; Rafiq & Ahmed, 1993; 2000; Schultz, 2004). The intention was to use the IM concept as a strategic mechanism through which to facilitate the integration of functional boundaries within the organisation. Although such an aim as intended has not yet been fully realised, its pattern of development however, has generally evolved from the notion “that the “customer” is inside the organisation” (Berry, 1981, p.34).

Such a notion of IM captured the fascination of academic theorists who began to apply variety of interpretations to IM investigation. Unfortunately, the variety of IM

interpretations led to a diverse range of activities being grouped under the umbrella of IM. These activities include, for instance, internal market exchange (Sasser & Arbeit, 1976; Berry, 1981), a holistic management process that integrates the multiple functions of the organisation (George, 1990; Varey, 1995; Ahmed & Rafiq, 2000; Schultz, 2004), a cross-functional process of alignment and integration (Rafiq & Ahmed, 1993; Ahmed & Rafiq, 2003), a management philosophy for interactive marketing function (Gronroos, 1981; 1985), and management of internal business relationships (Gummesson, 1987; Piercy & Morgan, 1991; Rafiq & Ahmed, 1993; Voima, 2000). With the variety of IM interpretations and diverse range of activities, came the problem of contradictions at IM's conceptual level, which in turn, made its empirical investigations more difficult to undertake. Therefore, a thorough examination of the above often-ambiguous competing theoretical interventions would naturally be the starting point in my objective in the phenomenological process of establishing the structure of IM.

### **1.3 Commentary on extant IM definitions and measurement studies:**

A related aspect of the rationale for this study emerges from recent comments that IM's defining principle remains elusive (Rafiq & Ahmed, 2000). In addition, most previous empirical studies (e.g. Gounaris, 2006) investigating IM focus mainly on IM definitions and levels of adoption of IM by organisations. Previous studies (e.g. Ahmed *et al.*, 2003; Lings, 2004) that have focused on the measurement of IM in the hope of developing a model of IM as a managerial tool have constantly failed to articulate those activities that can constitute the structure of IM and those that cannot. This meant that frequently the efforts of such previous studies lack consistency in articulating precisely those activities/elements that should constitute IM. This

highlights the need to scrutinize existing IM definitions as well as studies of empirical nature investigating IM measurement. This is necessary in order to evaluate whether such academic views of IM sit at ease with the IM phenomenon as experienced by practitioners in their organisations.

#### **1.4 Organisation of the thesis**

This thesis is comprised of seven chapters. Chapter 2 presents a detailed critical review of the IM literature, with particular emphasis on scrutiny of the multiplicity of concepts closely associated with IM. The chapter comprises of two strands. The first strand examines the multi-conceptual nature of IM and its conceptual role, whilst the second strand scrutinises existing IM definitions and key empirical quantitative studies focusing on IM measurement. Chapter 2 concludes with a diagram classifying the competing schools of thought in IM followed by the research questions for this study as a whole. Chapter 3 details my understanding of the main theoretical variant of phenomenology guiding the current study. The rationale to execute this study using Giorgi's descriptive phenomenological praxis will be outlined in chapter 3. The chapter concludes with a critique of qualitative research method as well as the frame through which to evaluate and better understand the ecological validity of this study.

Chapter 4 reports the methodological details of this study as a whole. It includes a discussion of how I have taken this study forward through a personal narrative articulating my decision and choice of phenomenology. The chapter also justifies the sampling size whilst explaining the sampling process and the data collection method. It also presents the role of the pilot study in helping to streamline the main phenomenological study. For instance, one of the outcomes of the pilot study

suggested the need to modify the research questions for the main phenomenological interview process in order to grasp fully the emerging IM phenomenon as it presents itself.

Chapter 5 presents the phenomenological analysis of this study as well as outlines the phenomenological findings emerging from the phenomenological interviews. Chapter 6 discusses in detail the phenomenological findings of this study as a whole in relation to the findings of existing empirical studies in IM. The frame of discussion considers the major issues of convergence and divergence that emerge, with particular emphasis on how my phenomenological findings relate with the findings of IM studies with conventional research methodologies. The chapter concludes with a synthesis of the operating dynamics that emerge from my phenomenological findings. Finally, chapter 7 revisits my study's aims and objectives as well as presents the contributions of my study to knowledge. It should be noted that my contributions relate only to those managers who are exposed to, and whose IM experiences and implementation in their organisations is salient. The chapter concludes with the study's limitations, its implications for academic research and practice as well as recommendations for future research.

## **1.5 Summary**

This chapter has outlined in brief the background to my study, its objectives and the rationale for my study as well as the methodological process for achieving its aims. The chapter concluded with a summary highlighting the contents of the different chapters that comprise this study. The next chapter begins with a detailed critical review of the extant IM literature with focus on addressing the last two objectives of this study.

## **Chapter Two**

### **Examination of the multiplicity of terms associated with the IM concept**

#### **2.0 Overview**

The main purpose of this chapter is to clarify the often-misunderstood competing theoretical perspectives associated with the IM concept through critical review of the existing IM literature. This chapter comprises of two strands that relate to key aspects of debates in IM domain field. The first strand is divided into five sections with a focus on (1) IM as internal exchange, (2) IM as a managerial philosophy, (3) IM as the management of business relationships, (4) IM as a process of cross-functional alignment, and (5) IM as a process of cross-functional integration. The second strand comprises a review of existing IM definitions and the critical examination of key empirical studies and their operationalisation of the IM concept. The chapter concludes with a diagram classifying the key competing debates and schools of thought in IM as well as the key phenomenological research questions guiding the current study. First, I begin with the historical perspective on IM.

#### **2.1 An introduction to internal marketing:**

Historically, IM emerged from the field of services marketing literature and increasingly became relevant across a wide range of academic research activity by specifying a theory of action(s) inside the organisation that serves to build external customer orientation (Ahmed & Rafiq, 1995). The seventies changing scenario in the nature of the internal business environment as a result of the increased focus on employee performance as key to organisational performance was particularly crucial to stimulating academic debate in IM. Sasser & Arbeit (1976) first alluded to what now

constitutes the mainstream theoretical discussion of IM as an area of academic research and management activity. They argue forcefully that the development of the service economy in the seventies entailed that service firms must recognise that its most critical productive resource is its workforce. According to them, “the key to success is for the service business to regard its jobs as its principal products and its employees as its most important customers” (Sasser & Arbeit, 1976, p.62). This is because, as Levitt (1972, p. 43) reports, the customer continues to view service as personal, as something “one individual performs personally for another.” This would imply that employees remain the essential ingredient for effective service delivery.

However, Berry (1981, p.34) is credited with coining the term IM. He suggests that IM can be considered as “viewing employees as internal customers, viewing their jobs as internal products.” The idea of internal customer, as Rafiq & Ahmed (1993) identify, means that individuals in the organisation can be regarded as both suppliers and customers, and the workings of an organisation can be thought of as a series of transactions between these ‘internal customers’ and ‘internal suppliers’. This implies that the organisation needs to be understood as an *internal market* in the same way that marketers consider their traditional *external* market(ing) environment.

Central to understanding the notion of organisation as a market minimally warrants some brief outline of organisational theory dynamics. This is to establish more clearly the frame through which to understand the deeper roots of IM as constituting the internal aspect of the market exchange relationship. The thread of discussion will focus on transaction cost from the perspective of internal market exchange relationships. A transaction cost is any activity that is engaged in “to satisfy each party to an exchange



that the value given and received is in accord with his or her expectation” (Ouchi 1980, p.130).

Economic and organisational theorists (e.g. Coase, 1937) imply that firms voluntarily arise because the economic transactions controlled within them represent a more efficient way of organising production. Williamson (1975) argues that the activities of the organisation are defined not just by economic factors but also by the nature and the efficiency of the structures within it. These structures are usually established by a combination of those activities e.g. economic and behavioural norms, the organisation undertakes in order to obtain and transform resources e.g. labor, values, as well as distribute resources e.g. products/services, money.

Although Coase (1937) and Williamson (1975) argue from the transaction(s) cost perspective of market exchange relationships in organisations, the ‘exchange’ to which they refer is more than simply ‘wage for effort’, as Pitt & Foreman (1999) identify<sup>1</sup>. Rather, it also involves the more complex social interactions between the employer and the employee. This view provides a framework which allows one to identify the conditions that not only give rise to the costs of mediating exchanges between individuals, but also, as Ouchi (1980) identifies, to understand that each individual gives something of value e.g. labour, and receives something of value e.g. money, in return. This clearly speaks to the internal aspect of the market exchange relationships,

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<sup>1</sup> Pitt & Foreman (1999) identify broadly two ways in which organisational transactions can be analysed. One strand - which goes back to Marx, sees the organisation as a non-market form within a market economy in which capitalist organisations internally operate as coercive hierarchies. A second strand rejects this approach and sees the relations within an organisation as a series of internal transactions, whilst recognising that such internal transactions are not exactly identical to external market (transactions) dynamics. This approach nevertheless, stresses the importance of voluntary internal (market) exchanges, and therefore resonates with the IM principles.

since employees are widely perceived to offer their labour in return for compensation, say, in the form of money.

Therefore, it follows that most IM proponents would readily take the view, as Ouchi (1980) argues, that in a traditional external market relationships, the exchanges that occur between two parties are often mediated by a price mechanism in which the existence of competitive markets reassures both parties as to the fairness of the terms of the exchange. In contrast, in internal market exchange relationships individuals contribute labour to the organisation, which assumes the task of mediating the relationship by placing a value on each contribution and then compensating it equitably. Unlike in the traditional markets, however, what exists in the organisation are arguably quasi-markets in which parties are connected by a set of binding mechanisms e.g. individual-cum-organisational goals, which ensure interactions and adaptations in order to enhance the overall customer experience. This suggests that the perception of equity in each market exchange relationship will of course be different.

In the case of market exchange relationships internally, equity usually depends on a social agreement and/or arrangement that allows the organisation to assume the responsibility and/or the obligation of mediating the relationship by compensating its members equitably (Pitt & Foreman, 1999). The organisation also ensures that transaction exchanges are valued and the terms perceived as equitable. In turn, the organisation can expect to have members who are willing to commit to the organisation's goals. It is the effective management of these internal exchange relationships, as Ahmed & Rafiq (2003, p.1176) emphasize, "that allows the 'delivery' of what marketing has promised externally." However, since the parties connected to

the exchange relationships in the case of traditional markets, i.e. organisation-customer, are arguably, more often likely to behave in their own interest or act opportunistically. The question then arises as to how organisations can develop and manage effectively exchange relationships internally. Relationship marketing, as several IM scholars (e.g. [Gumesson, 1987](#); [Ahmed & Rafiq, 2003](#)) identify, provides an obvious theoretical standpoint through which to tackle this problem. Therefore, the relational approach to marketing underpins much of IM thinking, and provides an alternative framework to the nature of market exchange relationships that occur outside the organisation, as [Bell \*et al.\*, \(2003\)](#) have found

Similarly, [Pitt & Foreman \(1999\)](#) have earlier reported the role of IM in the organisation from a transaction cost perspective. Their study echoes [Bell, \*et al.\*, \(2003\)](#), and suggests an alternative frame through which to explore further the exchange relationships internally vis a vis the relational approach. Based on the governance mechanisms guiding employer-employee transactions, they refer to the relational market as one with the “lowest level of transaction costs” in which “market mechanisms will be more efficient” ([Pitt & Foreman, 1999, p.31](#)). They argue that the relational market mechanism relies largely on interpersonal bonds and procedures to regulate the exchange process between parties to the exchange relationships, e.g. employer-employee relationship. In their view, in relational markets, the employee would have more affinity for what the organisation stands for. Since he or she is compensated by “higher job satisfaction, higher wages, and more benefits”, whilst employers in turn, “gain the rewards of commitment” ([Pitt & Foreman, 1999, p.31](#)).

In addition, the market exchange relationships in the organisation indeed allow the flexibility to customise (e.g. personalising rewards) the employment transaction dynamics, since the organisation is in a position to cater for the needs of the individual and his or her predispositions in employment. This can be achieved by giving specific attention to the needs and preferences of the individual in the design of jobs, and in overall operations, given there is goal congruence. Goals are congruent when the employer and the employee have mutual expectations and a clear sense of purpose in the pursuit of corporate goals. Therefore, it behoves the organisation to ensure that the bases of its market exchange relationships with its members meet the standards of what [Ahmed & Rafiq \(2003, p.1182\)](#) coin as “the circle of reciprocity” in IM terminology. This is when the organisation can demonstrate that it is committed to its employees, only then can its employees respond in kind, and become committed to its success.

[Sasser & Arbeit \(1976\)](#) had earlier foreseen the foregoing and reason that organisations require an integrative approach in order to understand the critical role of employees in such market exchange relationship. They highlight the fact that since the core concept of marketing transaction is the exchange of values between two parties, “the employer-employee relationship is such a transaction, in which the things-of-value exchanged include time, energy and feelings, as well as money” ([Sasser & Arbeit 1976, p.64](#)). Put differently, the market exchange dynamic inside the organisation is premised on the notion that the internal business relationship between employers and their employees is not different from the nature of business relationship that exists between organisations and their external customers.

The reality is, however, that whilst the foregoing provides the theoretical touchstones with which to consider, and perhaps, accept the IM concept as an academic research activity, I can hardly deny the fact that its viability as an organisational tool remains elusive. Not least because apart from the fact that IM varies widely in interpretation and application in the marketing and other management literatures e.g. organisational behaviour, its meaning and constituents structure remain undeniably ambiguous and confusing (Rafiq & Ahmed, 1993). This is because most studies in the field have been of a prescriptive and normative nature (Pitt & Foreman, 1999; Mudie, 2003). Therefore, the first task in my critical review of the literature is to provide some clarification of the confusing and the competing theoretical alternatives often associated with IM. The next section will attempt to address this task.

## **2.2 The theoretical confusion surrounding the notion of IM**

That the concept of IM is in a great deal of confusion as to exactly what it is supposed to do and how it is supposed to do it is almost a truism. Most of the confusion stems from the competing academic viewpoints as well as the often-misunderstood multiplicity of terms closely associated with the IM concept. This section aims to delineate and clarify such confusing array of terms from a multi range of perspectives including a) IM as internal exchange logic (Berry, 1981), b) IM as a managerial philosophy (Gronroos, 1981; 1985; Ahmed & Rafiq, 2003), c) IM as management of business relationships (Voima, 2000), and d) IM's cross-functional role of alignment and integration (Gronroos, 1985; Rafiq & Ahmed, 1993; 2000). Each of these terms is linked with a wider theoretical field, such as, marketing and services marketing to which IM relates.

### 2.3 IM and the logic of internal market exchange

The notion of IM as a mechanism for internal market exchange emerged from the services marketing literature during the 1980s period of changing socio-economic conditions. During this period, issues of employee concerns dominated the services' marketing literature, such that the idea was to create a substantially enhanced internal business relationship between organisations and their workforce in the hope that such effort would lead eventually to an efficient and more effective organisation. Thus, in an attempt to engender such a business atmosphere, marketing scholars (e.g. Berry, 1981) sought to present the organisation as a market in which the owners must seek to satisfy individuals within it in much the same fashion as they seek to satisfy the interests of external customers. Positing the organisation as a market has implications for the idea of IM as internal exchange logic.

The internal exchange logic is underpinned by the notion that the internal business relationship between employees and employers is not different from the nature of business relationship that exists between organisations and their external customers (Berry, 1981). This implies that the early basic premise of IM rests upon the notion that the organisation must be understood as a market in the same way that marketers consider their traditional marketing environments. This view suggests that there is some kind of *exchange* when the organisation and its supporting networks including employees, suppliers and distributors come together at some point to interact. Day & Wensley (1983) identify that integral to understanding the logic of internal exchange is understanding the nature of exchange that takes place within the organisation. That is, the notion that there is marketing inside the organisation when the organisation has a job to sell to employees, suppliers or distributors. Such notion is predicated upon the

view that by satisfying the needs of employees and other stakeholders (e.g. suppliers, distributors) as internal customers of the organisation, organisations are more likely to satisfy their external customers (Berry, 1981; De Bussy *et al.*, 2003).

Although the above view remains largely contested, several studies (e.g. Berry, 1981; 1984; Gronroos, 1981; 1985; Day & Wensley, 1983; Collins & Payne, 1991) highlighting the logic of internal market exchange argue that such notion would enable the organisation to focus on satisfying the employees' needs as internal customers just as they focus on satisfying their external customers' needs. This view attempts to extend the dynamics of external marketing activities to internal marketing in which consumers exchange money for goods and services, and in which employees exchange their skills for jobs that provide amongst others some form of compensation, as Berry (1981) identifies. Consistent with Berry, Collins & Payne (1991) contend that the use of marketing ideas must not be confined narrowly to products and services, but on the expectation that people who buy products or services are also involved in the same type of exchange logic as people who seek employment that is satisfying.

However, the logic of internal exchange must be approached with caution, as its notion in the marketing and management literature remains divisive, especially, amongst critics who find the notion very difficult to comprehend. For instance, although Rafiq & Ahmed (1992) appear not to disavow entirely the underlying notion that underpins the logic of internal exchange, they however, caution on the nature of its use and construction. They question whether such an idea is workable between an employee and the employer in the same way as the external marketing given there could be some elements of coercion where the 'products' (jobs) employees are sold

may have ‘negative utility’. They argue that an employee may feel compelled to accept unwanted jobs as internal products, which may or may not be directly beneficial because of the contractual obligations of his or her employment.

Kotler and Levy (1969) echo similar views, and emphasize that marketing activities should indeed consist of non-coercive activities. Others (e.g. Mudie, 2003) argue that since employee’s life is eclipsed by the changing structures and routinised procedures pervasive in modern day business environment, it remains to be seen how the logic of internal exchange can hold up to scrutiny. Despite the above views, Berry (1981) and Collins & Payne (1991) particularly insist that the internal exchange logic is of relevance to understanding the concept of IM. However, emerging from the logic of internal market exchange is the notion of ‘employee as internal customer’, which is often misinterpreted as ‘employee as customer’. A review of these two notions is therefore called for in order to suggest an appropriate term for use in IM domain.

### **2.3.1 ‘Employee as internal customer’ versus ‘employee as customer’**

The notion of ‘employee as internal customer’ is more often than not misinterpreted in the management literature (See, for example, Hales, 1994; Foreman and Money, 1995) with ‘employee as customer’. Therefore, this section will first attempt to draw the line by explaining the distinction between the two notions before proceeding with a clarification of which term is perhaps, more appropriate for use in the domain field of IM.



Both the notion of ‘employee as customer’ and the notion of ‘employee as internal customer’ appeared pre-eminently in the services marketing literature in the early eighties when [Berry \(1981\)](#) initially discussed the concept of IM in the *Journal of Retail Banking*. However, the nuances of usage and the application of both notions in the IM literature are very often misunderstood, contrived and wrongly interpreted. [Berry \(1981, p.34\)](#) first used the term ‘employee as customer’ as the title of his paper on IM, but articulates the concept of IM in the same paper by describing it as an academic discipline that views “employees as internal customers’ and their ‘jobs as internal products.” Thus, the above explanation provides the critical departure point between the notion of ‘employee as customer’ and the notion of ‘employee as internal customer’ in the context of this study. Therefore, this study takes the view that the notion of employee as internal customer is arguably more appropriate term for use in IM domain.

This is because the notion of ‘employee as internal customer’ carries a much more restrictive definition of the employee’s life as a customer in contrast to ‘employee as customer’, which has a much wider boundary-spanning association with my understanding of the ‘traditional’ customer. The notion of employee as internal customer reinforces an idea that otherwise would have put less emphasis on the principle that underlies internal exchange logic, which is underpinned by recognising employee satisfaction as crucial to external customer satisfaction ([Quester & Kelly, 1999](#)). Viewing or defining IM from this lens nonetheless, as [Mudie \(2003\)](#) identify, will hinge on the conceptual strengths, aims and the perceived legitimacy of IM phenomenon. There can be inherent difficulties in transposing the characteristics very typical of external customers to employees. The contractual nature of employment

may not permit such transposition. For instance, an employee could face a threat of disciplinary action e.g. suspension or even a dismissal for failing to carry out his or her assigned duties without a reasonable cause. In contrast, an external customer can reject offers from a particular product/service provider without the threat of similar disciplinary action, although there can be circumstances in which the external customer may be compelled to honour contractual obligations, i.e. if any exists, to such a provider.

Although some (e.g. Mudie, 2003) have argued that the notion of ‘employee as customer’ in whatever form is a diminution of the employee identity, it however highlights the need to recognise employees’ performance as vital to organisational performance, as Berry (1984) emphasizes. This is because as employees engage in one form of exchange process or another with each other, their actions arguably either positively or negatively influence the activities of parties in such exchange process. The outcome of such influences in either case will have resultant implications for the overall activities of the organisation. Therefore, by employees recognising and viewing each other as ‘internal customers’ engenders the behavioural tendency amongst them to get such exchanges right regardless of circumstances. On the contrary, the notion of ‘employee as customer’ does not only fail to highlight employee performance as crucial to organisational performance, it fails to recognise the importance of employees’ responsibilities to each other as well as their contributions towards the overall success of the organisation.

In **Berry's (1981)** view, by organisations recognising their employees as internal customers, they are more likely to be inclined to identifying and understanding employees' needs and wants with a view to satisfying such needs. If employees' needs are understood and satisfied, it is more likely that such employees would be inclined to satisfy ultimately, the needs of external customers. Since, as **Quester & Kelly (1999)** found, satisfied employees are far more likely to ensure greater efficiency and effectiveness in the discharge of their functions than if otherwise they were dissatisfied. **Rafiq & Ahmed (2000)** got to the crux of the matter. They argue that although the early formulation of IM along the notion of 'employee as internal customer' needs to be *re-examined* carefully, they agree that the notion seems more appropriate for use in IM domain than the notion of 'employee as customer'. They however emphasize the need to view IM more broadly in terms of its outcomes, i.e. "the implementation of marketing and other programmes, rather than being concerned with specifics of whether the employee is "king" (**Rafiq & Ahmed, 1993, p.230**). With this focus established, attention is now turned to the notion of IM as a management philosophy.

#### **2.4 IM as management philosophy**

The primary function of IM as a management philosophy is varied and unclear. IM is however perceived as an interactive marketing activity that permeates the cross-functional units within an organisation (**Gronroos, 1985**). IM focuses on overall employee job and customer satisfaction as well as organisational productivity through continuous assessment of the tasks employees are assigned, and the conditions under which they execute such tasks (**Tansuhaj et al., 1987; Ahmed & Rafiq, 2003**).

As a management philosophy, IM propounds the idea that the major role of management is to plan and build a successful flexible network of internal exchanges with internal parties in order to ensure effective external delivery systems. In such sense, IM is perceived “as a co-ordinating philosophy because it considers and co-ordinates “all” activities – including internal and external relationships, networks, interaction and collaborations by examining all activities involved in satisfying customers throughout the internal supply chain” (Ahmed & Rafiq, 2003, p. 1180). This implies that IM is a philosophy that brings together all processes and functions, whilst ensuring that every category of employees is actively involved in the implementation of organisational goals.

Clearly, such co-ordinating effort cannot be the marketing task alone. Ballantyne (2003) for instance, argues that it would involve marketers and non-marketers working in collaboration with one another in order to easily access and mutually interpret their rich experiences in exchange knowledge relationships. In other words, such a view of IM entails bringing every “individual [within the organisation] into a collective unit, performing in concert to the orchestra of strategic coherence and alignment” (Ahmed & Rafiq, 2003, p.1180). This implies that IM complements the traditional marketing techniques by developing a marketing programme directed at the internal marketplace of the employees using the same basic external marketing techniques (Piercy & Morgan, 1991). Thus, “an organisation’s internal market of employees can be influenced most effectively and hence be motivated to customer-consciousness, market-orientation and sales-mindedness by a marketing-like internal approach and by applying marketing-like activities internally” (Gronroos, 1985, p.42).

The foregoing however, can be linked with others (e.g. George, 1990; Collins & Payne, 1991; Glassman & McAfee, 1992) who argue that IM is a managerial philosophy for attracting and retaining the best possible skills in the organisation. Several IM studies (e.g. George, 1990; Berry & Parasuraman, 1991) provide a framework through which to examine IM as a philosophy that attracts and retains the best possible skills in the organisation. George (1990) for example, argues that IM is a philosophy for managing the organisation's human resources based on a marketing perspective. Others (e.g. Berry & Parasuraman, 1991, p.151) have succumbed to this viewpoint, and extended their original notion of IM to include "attracting, developing, motivating and retaining qualified employees through job products that satisfy their needs." Glassman & McAfee (1992) argue forcefully that IM is a philosophy that integrates the marketing functions and the HRM functions to the extent that HRM becomes a resource tool for the marketing function in order to ensure effective organisational behaviour.

A cynical interpretation of the foregoing would appear at first sight to be an invasion of the HRM functions by the IM domain field. Indeed, many studies (e.g. Hales, 1994; Foreman & Money, 1995; Pitt & Foreman, 1999) appear to suggest this. For instance, Hales (1994) is highly critical of any view that suggests IM has such managerial implications for HRM functions. From an HRM perspective, he pointedly argues<sup>2</sup> that IM is a misleading relabelling of HRM that has shown to suffer serious theoretical and practical limitations. Whilst his contentions may be useful in highlighting the need to reconsider the role and the structure of IM, as implied by Varey & Lewis (1999), his views however, present a narrow line of reasoning. For example, Hales's (1994) view of

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<sup>2</sup> Hales (1994) contends that internal marketing-like activities are promotional advertising selling points for management programmes that often manipulate and relegate employees. He also holds that IM is the manipulation of the "4Ps" marketing activities, which imposes a particular unitarist ideology in the organisation, and suggests instead, that employees must change their needs and understand the needs of the employer.

IM as the technique developed to promote the organisation, together with its mission, activities and forms of employment to its employees as internal customers is a narrow view of IM. However, his contention that IM is “elusive” and “characterised by a diversity of meaning” (Hales 1994, p.50) is welcome. Hence, a study exploring how the concept of IM, as developed by academic researchers, is experienced in the world of practice is called for.

IM’s philosophical stance, as Ahmed & Rafiq (2003) contend, has indeed progressed to focus on the coordination and the execution of the functional activities of different units within the organisation through its enabling agency, the employee. IM is believed to achieve co-ordination by engendering effectiveness within the firm through the cross-functional integration of various organisational activities (George, 1990; Berry, 1981; Collins & Payne, 1991; Rafiq & Ahmed, 2000). The key aspect of IM role as a managerial philosophy therefore, lies in its co-ordination of all internal processes. These include human and non-human infrastructure within the business, and looking out for where the business is in functional ‘silos’ in order to overcome internal resistance to organisational change and mobilise the required level of internal support that will guarantee overall effectiveness (Rafiq & Ahmed, 1993). Thus, although Hales’s contention that internal marketing-like activities are promotional selling points that manipulate and relegate employees are interesting, they are, however, indicative of a shortsighted view of IM as management philosophy.

IM’s stance as a management philosophy, as several IM studies (e.g. Gronroos, 1981; 1985; Rafiq & Ahmed, 1993; Varey & Lewis, 1999) suggest, also rests in its ability to co-ordinate the internal business relationships vital to establishing an effective link with

external business relationships. Within this, there is a notion that IM can be used to attract and retain the right kind of employees. Although attracting and retaining employees with the right skills is widely perceived as an important aspect of HRM function, as Guest (1987; 1997) makes clear, there is a perception (e.g. Collins & Payne, 1991) that organisations can only retain their best employees' skills by improving their jobs, as internal products, as well as the conditions under which they carry out such jobs. Organisations can retain and improve their employees' skills through the effective utilisation of IM initiatives, such as, motivation packages, empowerment initiatives, and strong management support for employee career development. Rafiq & Ahmed (1993) believe that such IM initiatives lend credence to IM's claim as a managerial tool for the management of business relationships in any type of organisation.

## **2.5 IM and the challenge of business relationships management**

The notion that IM is crucial to the successful management internal and external of business relationships has received attention in the management literature (Berry, 1981; Gronroos, 1981; Gummesson, 1987; Piercy & Morgan, 1991; Rafiq & Ahmed, 1993; Voima, 2000). These studies generally note that IM is an ongoing management activity that is executed through series of performance enhancing initiatives within the organisation, which focus on managing all internal business relationships that affect the external customer's perception of value. IM achieves this by guiding all people, functions and processes within the organisation through its systematic appreciation of needs and aspirations of different parties to such internal business relationships (Ahmed & Rafiq, 2003). Of relevance however, are the views, as suggested by Voima (2000), that IM not only identifies, maintains and develops internal business relationships but also the termination of such relationships if or when considered necessary.

Voima's views contain the ambiguities and contradictions often associated with the IM concept. The view that IM is a mechanism for the development and termination of business relationship presents a profoundly distorted notion of IM. Such a view is inconsistent with the mainstream IM principle regarding the management of internal business relationships (See, for example, De Bussy *et al.*, 2003; Bell *et al.*, 2004). De Bussy *et al.*, (2003) for instance, particularly emphasize that IM mainly seeks to build and manage the business relationships between internal and external stakeholders to a business. Voima (2001) transposes external marketing dynamics, in which, for instance, a customer could unilaterally choose to terminate a business relationship, to the internal context in an uncritical fashion without sufficient recognition of the wider body of IM studies that examine concepts, such as, "a model of relational internal marketing and customers" (Bell *et al.*, 2004). In a sample of 365 retail employees within 115 stores of an Australian retail organisation, Bell *et al.*, (2004) found that adopting a relational approach to IM proved to be a meaningful way through which to implement it effectively in organisations.

The above study amply clarifies the role of IM as a mechanism for the effective management of internal business relationships that affect the external customers' perception of value. Simply transposing external marketing principles to the internal market environment may have unintended consequences, as established by Bell *et al.*, (2004). Therefore, care needs to be taken in transposing external marketing dynamics to the internal context given that the principles guiding internal business relationships are very different from the principles guiding external business relationships. Whereas it might be easy for a customer to terminate a business relationship with, for example, a



service provider, such process may be difficult for an employee in the internal market situation because of the contractual nature of employment.

Moreover, the resource implications for terminating vis-à-vis attracting new internal business relationships (i.e. employees) may be too high to bear for the organisation given the resource implications involved, in for example, recruitment and the training of new hires. Importantly, some studies (e.g. [Ahmed \*et al.\*, 2003](#); [Ahmed & Rafiq, 2003](#); [Schultz, 2004](#)) have found that internal and external business relationships can be managed successfully using appropriate IM strategy. They identify that IM aims to guide all people, functions and processes within an organisation through its interactive and systematic appreciation of needs of different parties to such business relationships. Several studies (e.g. [Gumesson, 1987](#); [Ahmed & Rafiq, 2003](#); [Bell \*et al.\*, 2004](#)) provide the framework through which to consider the appropriate level of interactive activity in the management of business relationship via IM. They generally identify that IM helps multiple operations and people with different skills-sets to be actively involved in building sustainable value business relationships since they all have a major influence in determining the outcomes.

Echoing the above view, [Tanjahal \*et al.\* \(1987\)](#) note that business relationship outcomes are determined by the inter-play of various activities internal and external to the environment in which such business operates. The task, therefore, is determining the critical and the non-critical set of activities as well as needs in the management of internal and external business relationships via IM initiatives in order to achieve or establish the appropriate levels of interactive activity. Organisations can use IM initiatives to ensure there is interactive business activity amongst individuals and

between departments within the firm, in the expectation that individuals and different functional units will be able to meet and satisfy end users' priorities through the delivery of superior value at all times.

In accord with the above view, Davis (2001) emphasizes that IM ensures there is such an interactive function, as IM harnesses both internal and external business relationships through the management of the total set of relationships amongst individuals and interactions between departments that bring about additional value for the organisation. This implies that IM enables organisations to manage effectively their business relationships with individuals and groups of individuals within and outside the business. This includes such individuals who fall within the boundary of internal markets, such as, suppliers and distributors, as Ahmed & Rafiq (2003) identify. Although such IM function has yet to be established empirically, it may in fact be more relevant to think in terms of IM's value to the cross-functional activities within the organisation.

## **2.6 IM and the cross-functional process of alignment**

From an IM perspective, cross-functional alignment involves the strategic process of linking and the proper utilisation of internal processes aimed at achieving cohesion throughout the organisation. Rafiq & Ahmed (1993) provide the theoretical basis upon which to examine IM as a process of cross-functional alignment. They recognise IM as a planned effort that aligns employees towards the effective and cross-functional implementation of corporate strategies. Similarly, Gronroos (1981) argues that IM brings together various management activities that run through the different functional units and entities throughout the organisation. Rafiq & Ahmed (1993) argue that IM aims to complement and incorporate every internal process within the business as part

of its wider strategic focus. This implies that regardless of whether the individual is in the human resource department or marketing department, IM aligns the efforts of such individuals with the implementation of cross-functional and corporate strategies.

Through its cross-functional alignment mechanism, IM has the potential of creating in the individual a sense of involvement and commitment towards achieving collective goals regardless of the individual's hierarchical functions within the organisation. This means that IM co-ordinates various existing marketing and non-marketing activities throughout the organisation in order to make such activities more market-oriented (Glassman & McAfee, 1992). Through such co-ordination, IM introduces a vibrant and robust marketing activity throughout the organisation that enables every organisation member to become a key player in carrying out the organisation's corporate activities. This entails that organisations must ensure that employees not only understand the jobs (as internal products) that are being offered, but that they also accept the nature of jobs being 'marketed' by organisations.

In the above sense, as Rafiq & Ahmed (1993) concur, employees need to clearly understand and accept, for example, why new programmes (e.g. new policies) are being introduced and how the organisation intends to implement and manage the issues that may arise from the implementation of such new programmes. This can be achieved by ensuring that new organisational programmes are widely supported and fully developed internally by involving employees in the development of such new programmes as well as creating awareness of such programmes. In other words, "...employees should be informed before the consumers are informed. And this information must be given in such a way that it is notified, understood and implemented" (Gronroos, 1981, p.238).

Informing and notifying employees about new organisational programmes entails gaining a 'buy-in' from everyone within the business during the process of formulation and the development of new programmes before launching such new programmes externally. Arguably, new organisational programmes that are not fully developed and/or supported internally before being launched or marketed externally are far less likely to succeed in achieving the desired objectives. Because if employees as contact persons do not understand the benefits and disadvantages of new organisational programmes, they may be confused as to their actual role during the implementation process, and as [Gronroos \(1981\)](#) observes, during their interactive marketing activities with external customers. Moreover, if employees are not adequately internally aware of new programmes in the organisation, it could mean that their efforts may lead to frustration and subsequently, inaction. This in turn could lead to failure in satisfying the needs of both the internal and the external customers as well as in realising the overall intended aims such new programmes were designed to achieve.

Proper cross-functional alignment across internal boundaries within the business via IM initiatives is crucial to providing employees with the requisite performance tools vital to success at those 'moments of truth' when the organisation and the customers interact ([Carlzon, 1987](#)). Essentially, the cross-functional alignment process via IM is broadly concerned with achieving internal cohesion and improving internal processes necessary for creating both internal and external customer value. Several studies ([Berry, 1984](#); [Gronroos, 1985](#); [Piercy & Morgan, 1991a](#); [Rafiq & Ahmed, 1993](#); [Piercy, 1995](#); [Rafiq & Ahmed, 2000](#); [Schultz, 2004](#)) emphasize that the IM cross-functional alignment process must be understood as a unifying (marketing function) mechanism that pervades the entire organisation and not just among isolated members or units within the

business. Such premise clearly suggests that IM can be viewed as an integrative mechanism that links all internal processes including employees within the organisation with corporate strategies.

## **2.7 IM and the challenge of integration**

The notion of IM as a vehicle for integration means that IM is not a management approach separate from other functional/departmental activities within the organisation. It encompasses a broad range of activities aimed at integrating and enhancing cross-functional efficiency and effectiveness within the organisation (Gronroos, 1985; Rafiq & Ahmed, 1993; 2000; Varey, 1995; Schultz, 2004). IM engenders cross-functional integration by ensuring there is individual involvement and commitment towards the successful implementation of organisational programmes. Such involvement relates to not only individuals, but also all other organisational resources, such as, systems and sub-systems, equipment, information as well as the appropriate level of skills that generate and sustain value-added. As integrative mechanism within the business, Ahmed & Rafiq (2003) posit that IM ensures that employees in every part of the organisation are actively involved in the delivery of quality throughout the customer-supplier chain.

Implicit in this is the view that IM challenges the “traditional organisational structuring whereby companies continue to enact and re-enact functional silos” (Ahmed & Rafiq, 2003, p.1178). This entails that IM ensures that multiple operations, tools and people with different skill-sets are actively involved in the delivery process which affects the external customer’s perception of value. This implies that through its integrative mechanism, IM ensures that different organisational operations and core business

processes are designed from the end-customer's point of view. IM achieves this through the effective utilisation of a portfolio of skills within the organisation, and by maximising internal relationships “for the purposes of attaining sustainable competitive advantage” (Varey 1995, p.49). This involves identifying people issues and organisation issues, where different entities and processes are perceived as integral to achieving organisational effectiveness.

Achieving organisational effectiveness is central to IM's function as mechanism for the cross-functional process of integration within the business. Organisational effectiveness is an ingredient required in order to satisfy the different entities and stakeholders to the business. Satisfying different entities and stakeholders within the business entails taking into account different individual needs and goals within the business, executed via a framework that recognises building a balance between such individual needs and organisational goals (De Bussy *et al.*, 2003). IM is believed to be effective in building such a balance by mediating the relationship between individual needs and organisational goals as well as transporting individual specific skills and capabilities to organisational competence (Ahmed & Rafiq, 2003). Specifically, IM ensures there is a common integrative framework upon which to develop individual generalist skills, which are then transferred to organisational competencies necessary for the application of sound interactive marketing principles throughout the organisation (Gronroos, 1985).

By focusing on such task of mediation, IM becomes the common integrative machinery through which coherent internal exchanges (of values and functions) can take place within the organisation (Ahmed & Rafiq, 1995; Varey & Lewis, 1999). Implicit in this view is the assumption that IM ultimately, enhances the organisation's ability to harness

its employee's capabilities in order for them to perform effectively in the external marketplace. Enhancing such an organisation's ability is not only valuable, but also widely perceived to be sustained through the process of internal (market) employee survey and responsive internal product and service design and/or delivery (Berry, 1981; Collins & Payne, 1991; Rafiq & Ahmed, 1993; Varey, 1995). Internal market survey is therefore seen as vital to IM's function as a mechanism for cross-functional integration. Internal market surveys offer individuals within the business an avenue through which to express their views and feelings.

According to Ahmed & Rafiq, (2003, p. 1180), through an internal market survey, the organisation begins the process of integrating "all individuals and organisational functions, activities, communications and elements that a firm requires in order to create, develop and build solid internal structures that result in the delivery of "quality" expected by the final customer." IM drives the systematic process through which solid internal structures can be built along cross-functional boundaries by solidifying the internal processes required in order to integrate individual needs with organisational needs through internal market surveys (Berry 1981). Through an internal market survey, organisations can achieve cross-functional integration by asking both internal and external customers questions about business issues e.g. quality issues, instead of relying on the views of some (*in*)experienced top executives or other experts within the business, who, as Varey (1995b) remarks, may only be internally-focused but not externally-driven. In other words, decision-making and actions should be guided by the way things are in both the internal and external business environments in which the business operates, rather than by what managers feel or think.

In reinforcing the above view, [Varey \(1995b\)](#) suggests the need to conceptualise an alternative broadened IM framework with a focus on the internal social process to harness human interactions within the business. According to Varey, through such a broadened framework, IM can thus be viewed not only as a marketing function for economic exchange, but also as a social process that integrates non-economic values, such as, ethos, found in social groupings. [Varey \(1995b\)](#) claims that such IM framework will provide the mechanism for the major re-orientation and the much-needed integration in many organisational settings. However, establishing an IM framework as proposed by [Varey \(1995b\)](#) is far less likely to provide any additional impetus required in order to achieve an effective integration via IM along cross-functional boundaries within the organisation. Not least because Varey's view (of a broadened IM) ignores the fact that as part of its wider integrative function, IM incorporates and caters broadly to the non-economic values as well as the social (e.g. emotional) needs of individuals within the organisation.

IM creates the pathway through which the strategic cross-functional integration of a variety of internal social management issues can be addressed within the organisation. Several studies (e.g. [Gronroos, 1981](#); [Bak et al., 1995](#); [Thomson, 1998](#); [Kelemen, 2000](#); [Davis, 2001](#); [Ahmed & Rafiq, 2003](#)) examining broadly the nature of IM as a mechanism for an integrative function within the organisation clarify this point. They argue that IM integrates various social activities and business processes within the organisation including production and personnel, as well as the “existing concepts from various disciplines in order to make the use of such concepts more market-oriented” ([Gronroos, 1981, p.237](#)). Hence, as [Ahmed & Rafiq \(2003\)](#) particularly imply, IM's integrative mechanism must be perceived as incorporating and catering to the socio-



cultural values as well as the employees' emotional (capital) wellbeing within the organisation. The socio-cultural and the emotional aspects of IM's integrative functions will be examined below.

### **2.7.1 IM and the challenge of socio-cultural integration**

Since the idea of culture has been introduced as part of IM's broad integrative function, any discussion of sort minimally warrants some understanding of the culture literature as well as IM's role within it. Briefly, culture relates to a pattern of beliefs and values commonly shared by members of a group. It includes practices, rituals, activities, symbols and behaviours peculiar to a group and closely associated with an organisation (Shwartz & Davis, 1981). Schein (1985) suggests that culture consists of three dimensions, namely, assumptions, values, and artefacts, which can be manifested amongst a particular group of people. Assumptions are the often-taken-for-granted widely held views of human nature and social relationships that are not formally evidenced. Artefacts are the more solid or physical representations of culture that includes rituals, slogans, traditions and myths, whilst values represent preferences for alternative outcomes as well as means of achieving those outcomes. According to Wallace *et al.*, (1999), values are believed to be a measure of organisational culture rather than assumptions or artefacts, as values are perceived to be more accessible than assumptions as well as more reliable than artefacts.

The issue of culture is relevant to organisations since there is a notion that members are expected to know and understand certain ethos/values and behavioural patterns peculiar amongst members of a particular organisation. Such values are perceived to guide the behaviour of each member within that particular organisational context.

Appiah-Adu & Singh (1999) believe that culture is an organisational variable that exerts a powerful impact upon the environment, influencing behaviours and performances of its adherents, possibly more than the formal procedures and systems.

The notion of culture came into mainstream organisational discourse through social constructionist views rooted in cognitive processes (Pettigrew, 1979). Pettigrew (1990) later identifies that culture consists of cognitive systems that explain how people think, as well as the reasons why they think the way they do. As an organisational variable, culture involves a complex set of values, assumptions, and beliefs that define the ways in which a firm conducts its business. However, the combination of organisational practices, such as patterns of behaviour, values and belief systems are perceived to constitute organisational culture (Pettigrew, 1990). This implies that organisational culture involves a pattern of shared values and beliefs, which helps individuals to understand how the organisation functions in order to provide them with a pattern of expected behaviour (Desphande & Webster, 1989).

Parasuraman & Desphande (1984) identify that organisational culture is vital to determining proper marketing behaviour and management effectiveness in the organisation. Echoing this view, Desphande & Webster (1989) identify that proper marketing behaviour constitutes a basic set of values and marketing activities within the organisation that puts the customer at the heart of the organisation's approach to achieving firm performance. Similarly, Desphande *et al.*, (1993) argue that certain behavioural patterns amongst employees in an organisation reveal certain characteristics and appropriate set of values that explain the customer-oriented nature of such organisation. Gronroos (1985) identifies that appropriate set of values within

the organisation are defined by employees' behavioural patterns, such as, 'customer-consciousness', 'sale-mindedness', and 'customer orientation', which constitute part of IM's interactive marketing agenda. These views underscore the need for organisations, especially services firms, to focus on the concept of culture given its relevance to achieving customer orientation.

Although the relationship between IM and organisational culture has yet to be established clearly, [Ahmed & Rafiq \(2003\)](#) refer to the interlink between IM and the culture within the organisation. According to them, through its focus on employees, IM helps the process of identifying certain organisational behaviours and probes why they exist in order to create specific programmes to induce requisite behaviours that can enhance organisational effectiveness. Through such process, IM contributes to the nurturing of the right organisational environment in which customer-oriented culture, such as, customer-consciousness and sale-mindedness, as suggested by [Gronroos \(1985\)](#), become the pervasive marketing behaviour within the organisation. [Ahmed & Rafiq \(2003\)](#) identify that with IM such nurturance activity is shaped by the descriptive anthropology of how employees receive meanings in their continuous mutual interactions with each other. IM scrutinises these meanings and mutual interactions by examining the unavoidable relationships of employees to themselves, to other people, to the organisation and the world around them in order to create a mutual relationship amongst every party.

[Papazolomou-Doukakis & Kitchen \(2004\)](#) recognise that IM is a managerial activity geared towards creating a culture of mutual relationships within the organisation governed by the same exchange logic in the external markets. IM is the vehicle

through which individual behaviour can be managed as well as the collective culture that makes up the organisation. IM influences a set of organisational practices for the formation of corporate identity that transports individual creativity to organisational competence. IM transports individual creativity to organisational competence through harnessing the identical activities and values that are shared amongst organisation members during the interaction process (Ahmed & Rafiq, 2003).

Such shared values (e.g. customer consciousness, sales-mindedness) are in turn, exchanged during the interactive marketing activities between organisation members, and through organisational practices in which such members understand and have the same expectations as to the appropriate set of beliefs and behaviours that should guide each member. Having a shared value within the organisation is indeed crucial to generating loyalty and influencing certain marketing behaviour amongst employees. Wallace *et al.*, (1999) believe that shared values constitute the key ingredients that engender effective and integrative marketing behaviour perceived as the collective culture that pervade the organisation.

This entails, as Ahmed & Rafiq (2003) imply, that IM induces requisite (marketing) behaviours through the integration of the values and the ethos pervasive in the organisation and by enhancing the social process of examining the relationship of employees to themselves as well as the world around them. Through such complex social interaction, employees can observe, imbibe and internalise easily immutable cognitive values, such as, beliefs in positive service attitude and understanding of the corporate culture pervasive within the organisation. By imbibing and exhibiting immutable cognitive values, employees become transmitters of such values as well as

carriers of the corporate culture that exist within the organisation (Hogg *et al.*, 1998). These cognitive values constitute the integral part of individual aspirations as well as the social norms within the organisation, which, IM seeks to nurture by creating the enabling environment through which to transmit such norms as the commonly shared values within the organisation.

Having commonly shared values in the organisation has the potential of imprinting upon individuals certain behavioural attitudes and patterns including customer-consciousness and sales-mindedness, as identified by Gronroos (1981). These behavioural attitudes and patterns are in turn, manifested and transferred as desired values for the overall benefit of the organisation whereby those who internalise them are rewarded as opposed to those who disregard them, as Kelemen (2000) observes. Organisations benefit when desired values are internalised and shared by employees as well as manifested in their everyday dealings with external customers.

### **2.7.2 IM and the challenge of emotional integration**

Before proceeding with a review of the broad role of IM as a mechanism for integrating employees' emotional wellbeing, it is useful to highlight the current debate in the management literature relating to the issue of organisation and emotional capital. Such a discussion is called for given the confusion that surrounds the notion of organisation's emotional capital as well as IM's integrative role within it.

Emotional capital is generated within a social group through the process of social interaction. Waldron (1994) emphasizes that emotions act to influence the way through which organisation members interpret, regulate, and resist their organisational actions

vis-à-vis organisational programmes. Thomson (1998) identifies that the organisation's emotional capital can be held both internally and externally. Externally, emotional capital exists in the minds of customers and other stakeholders, whilst internally, emotional capital resides in the hearts and minds of employees within the business. Therefore, one can argue that elements such as, determination, pride, trust and commitment amongst employees can be considered to represent positive signs of an organisation's emotional capital, whilst anger, apathy, anxiety, envy and antagonism amongst employees can represent negative signs of an organisation's emotional capital.

From such a premise, it is suggested that employees can either support or withhold from the organisation the full weight of their emotional resources. Take for instance, a service setting where front-line employees are encouraged to fake a smile, or in some instances urged to show 'phoney friendliness'<sup>3</sup> whilst dealing with external others. Thomson (1998) observes that employees may be emotionally supportive or compelled under the strain of 'double identity', as Mudie (2003) remarks, to display phoney friendliness. This, sometimes, can be out of tune with employees' genuine feelings. As Thomson (1998) identifies, emotions permeate everything that happens within a social group including an organisation. Therefore, the way an organisation treats an employee has a significant influence in determining whether he or she will be emotionally detached or committed to the organisation.

Kupers (1998, p.341) notes that emotions in the workplace "are intertwined in an ambivalent tension", in which individuals often mask or "simulate" their emotions in order to save face or avoid embarrassment by managing the socially required

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<sup>3</sup> Phoney friendliness represents a management-controlled behaviour displayed by [e.g. frontline] employees and often disguised in order to avoid portraying the organisation in a bad light in front of external others (e.g. external customers, distributors and suppliers) .

impressions. Hence, an employee's investment (commitment) in an organisation's emotional capital can often result into what **Hochschild (1983)** refers to as 'emotional labour' or 'false personalisation'.

The concept of emotional labour has repeatedly come under attack in the wider management and IM literature (See, for example, **Hochschild, 1983; Kupers, 1998; Mudie, 2000; 2003; Ahmed & Rafiq, 2003**). As often, its purported benefits remain limited and insufficient in enhancing employees' emotional wellbeing. According to **Hochschild (1983)**, emotional labour refers to the trained management of feelings, or as **Ashforth & Humphrey (1993)** observe, trained management of behaviour in order to create what **Kupers (1998, p.340)** phrased as "a publicly observable embodied display." **Humphrey & Ashforth (1994)** argue that employees are often coerced into emotional labour through organisationally sanctioned scripts that tend to alienate them from their true feelings. According to them, such alienation can lead to employees' inability to make distinction between management coercion and friendliness within the organisation.

Emotional labour therefore can be considered to typify a whole range of management-contrived activities designed in order to manipulate employees' feelings/attitudes into being responsive and more sensitive to customers' needs solely for organisational gains. Such manipulation consequently results in the commercialisation of the individual's feelings, as **Hochschild (1983)** identifies. **Hochschild** observes that commercialisation of feelings or emotional labour is increasingly becoming a trend in organisational life.

Despite this trend, the demands of emotional labour are incompatible with workplace autonomy, especially, from an IM perspective. This is because emotional labour compels employees to endure the stress of organisationally imposed identities and their own true self-identities within the organisation. According to [Mudie \(2000\)](#), the demands of emotional labour cause tensions amongst employees, as they juggle a double identity. This is because ‘what’ to say and ‘how’ to say it or behave in certain circumstances become often a product of fixed patterns, which are scripted and imposed by the management, and often lacking any resonance of genuine inter-personal exchanges between parties involved in such exchanges.

Resonating this view, [Kupers \(1998\)](#) argues that reproducing fixed patterns within an organisation can force employees to pay attention to feelings other than their own, which can cause an emotionally charged atmosphere in which personal and interpersonal conflicts remain unresolved. An emotionally charged atmosphere marginalises the ability to share genuine individual experiences, and therefore, negates the intimacy and trust that should typically accompany personal interactions within the organisation, which IM espouses. Within this, IM is perceived to initiate the social process that dismantles the strains of emotional labour imposed by the stress of double identity in the organisation.

Emotional labour arises from organisationally controlled employees’ behaviours, which often lead to suppressed employees’ feelings and tensions. The suppression of employees’ feelings eliminates their creative participation and interaction, which could negatively affect employee-customer interactions. [Kupers \(1998\)](#) argues that the suppression of employees’ feelings (e.g. during their interactions with colleagues and/or



external others) could alter relational patterns (e.g. genuine inter-personal exchanges) and perceptions, which may lead to outburst of highly intense negative nature that often result into climate of distrust and disrespect. IM's role in this direction therefore, is to engender genuine inter-personal exchanges within the organisation, especially, amongst employees and between parties involved in inter-personal exchanges.

Ahmed & Rafiq (2003) suggest that IM achieves this by scrutinising the emotional contents and needs of individuals within the business, in order to reveal their true feelings and ultimately, the reality of the corporate environment. Through such scrutiny, IM is perceived to harness and integrate the emotional capital of the organisation by evolving mutual transparent processes that take into account the feelings and the emotional needs of everyone in the exchange process. Such an IM function creates the appropriate emotional climate that is more likely to satisfy the needs of individuals involved in the exchange process. Through evolving mutually transparent processes within the organisation, IM discourages any form of organisationally imposed behaviours by compelling the organisation to first focus on understanding and satisfying the genuine needs of individuals within the business before the formulation of corporate strategies.

By *redirecting* the organisational focus on understanding first the genuine needs of individuals within the business, IM provokes a radical understanding and manifestation of genuine inter-personal exchanges in the organisation. In a way that individuals are challenged to expose their real identities and genuinely get involved and become committed to achieving organisational programmes without the strains of 'double identity' and/or 'emotional labour'. Reinforcing this view, Ahmed & Rafiq (2003) argue

that IM sustains such socio-emotional climate by linking the individual's emotional needs with the corporate goals of the organisation through its cross-functional integrative mechanism. Such integrative IM function ensures that an individual's emotional attachment to his or her own goals reflects in large part the individual's emotional involvement and commitment to the organisation's goals.

Thus, IM's role in sustaining such a socio-emotional climate within the organisation must be understood as:

an emotionally intelligent philosophy, one based on the understanding that it is through the application of subjective emotions and empathic awareness that employees are able to make judgements that may or may not end-up in the realisation of the long-term corporate interests. The challenge of IM [in such process] is to force a rounded understanding of the organisational readiness for a particular new initiative by examining the full set of needs of the organisation [i.e. demand of organisation on the employees] in direct relation to the full set of needs and aspirations of the employee [i.e. demands of the employee on the organisation] (Ahmed & Rafiq, 2003, p.1184).

It is only through the above emotional climate can genuine inter-personal exchanges flow in the organisation devoid of any rationalised processes or systematic procedures designed to manipulate employees into exhibiting double *or false* identities, and thus, curb the strains of emotional labour. Therefore, broadly, the strategic support and sustenance of such a mutual social process (i.e. genuine inter-personal exchanges) is essentially the key role of IM in integrating the emotional capital within the organisation. The next section begins the second strand in the critical examination of the multiplicity of views associated with the IM concept.

## 2.8 Review of existing IM definitions

In reviewing the IM literature, the preceding sections have attempted to clarify the multi-conceptual nature of IM. This section will focus on reviewing extant IM definitions and the key empirical studies operationalising the IM concept in purely academic and quantitative terms.

The last three decades have witnessed an unprecedented number of studies (e.g. [Berry, 1981; 1984; Gronroos, 1981; 1985; Gumesson, 1987; George, 1990; Collins & Payne, 1991; Rafiq & Ahmed, 1993; Rafiq & Ahmed, 2000; Schultz, 2004](#)) attempting to articulate a proper IM definition. A quick review of these studies, as represented in [Table 2.1, page 57](#), suggests a plethora of competing alternatives purporting to address the meaning of IM. [Ahmed & Rafiq \(2002, p.3\)](#) lament the ambiguities arising from such previous attempts, and emphasize that in order for IM to be effectively understood as a paradigm for management and implementation of strategies, “a clarification at the definitional level is necessary.” In line with this view, this section reviews the inherent strengths and weaknesses in previous attempts to provide a definition of the IM concept.

The core definition of IM has generally progressed from [Berry’s \(1981\)](#) viewpoint, which presents employees as internal customers with needs that organisations must seek to satisfy in much the same manner they seek to satisfy their external customers’ needs given that jobs are the ‘internal products’ which employees are offered. This means that the organisation should be considered as the internal marketplace similar to the external marketplace. The above view, as [George \(1977, p.91\)](#) identifies, implies that “...to have satisfied customers, the firm must also have satisfied employees.”

However, there are a number of complexities associated with viewing IM from Berry's lens. First, apart from the obvious implications for management practices inherent in such a viewpoint, many (e.g. Rafiq & Ahmed, 1993) argue that the external customers remain the *raison d'être* for any organisation.

Secondly, Mudie (2003) suggests that Berry's (1981) view of IM is a diminution of its customer identity in comparison to the notion of 'customer is king'. Mudie exposes the limitations inherent in the definition of IM along the notion of 'internal customers' versus 'internal products'. According to him, such an IM definition conjures up only notions of employees as motivated, satisfied and committed, without allowing for the external equivalent of marginalised, victimised or rebellious employees that could equally exist in organisations. Although Mudie's (2003) contention attenuates the tendency to find a customer in every aspect of organisational activity, he however, concedes that employees must not only be conscious of external marketing environment, but of themselves as customers operating in their work environment.

Thirdly, there is a notion (e.g. Lings, 2000) that Berry's definition of IM is prone to all sorts of interpretations. As I mentioned in section 2.3.1, the notion of 'employees as internal customers' typifies the overarching area in which critics have repeatedly challenged the whole concept of IM. Lings (2000) for instance, stresses that Berry's IM definition fails to differentiate the various internal customers and their differing internal service expectations. Hence, the marketing efforts targeted at internal customers may not be externally effective. It is suggested, therefore, that IM definition should emphasize the functional roles of employees in the implementation of organisational objectives rather than its focus on the specifics of whether or not

employees should be viewed as internal customers. Considering IM from the perspective of employees' functional activities will certainly ensure that its principles are not only internally driven but also externally focused, as [Lings \(2000\)](#) advocate. Thus, it is argued that any definition of IM must recognise the interdependence of internal and external markets by establishing channels through which the overall marketing promises within the organisation can be fulfilled internally as well as delivered externally satisfactorily.

Clearly, such view of IM can be useful in two ways. Firstly, as [Gumesson \(1987\)](#) identifies, the interdependence of internal and external markets is vital to the successful and practical implementation of organisational goals. Secondly, as highlighted under [section 2.3.1](#), there is need to exercise caution in the use of the contentious notion of 'employee as internal customer' given the ambiguity surrounding such a notion, and concentrate on the functional roles of employees. Some studies ([e.g. Ahmed & Rafiq 1995, p.34](#)) echo this view, and suggest "a definition of internal marketing...has to drop the notion of 'employee as a customer'. Instead, the definition should set a boundary limited by the use of marketing-like techniques in the internal context." Some IM scholars have indeed attempted to present an IM definition along this line.

For instance, [Gronroos \(1985\)](#) suggests that IM involves engaging employees in interactive marketing at both the strategic and the tactical levels in order to respond to customer needs. However, Gronroos's view begs two crucial questions. First, is the question of *how* efficient or effective engaging employees in such interactive marketing behaviour should be in order to be considered as strategic or tactical? Another issue is

*who* judges the manner or the nature of such (interactive) engagement process in terms of its usefulness in ensuring organisational effectiveness. Gronroos's definition is nonetheless remarkable in one respect. Interactive marketing behaviour is widely considered as part of IM strategy that encourages employees to utilise contacts with external others as opportunities for cross selling within the organisation. An organisation can achieve such employee interactive marketing behaviour by encouraging successful exchanges between employees and the external customers by using marketing-like techniques internally.

Thus, as Gronroos (1985, p.42) identifies, "an organisation's internal market of employees can be influenced most effectively and motivated to customer consciousness, market orientation and sales mindedness by applying a marketing-like internal approach and by applying marketing-like activities internally." The use of marketing-like activities internally is consistent with the wider IM function of motivating employees towards customer-consciousness and sales-mindedness in order to achieve organisational effectiveness. George (1990, p.64) recognises that "the internal market of employees is best motivated for service mindedness, and a customer oriented behaviour by an active, marketing like approach, where marketing like activities are used internally." This indicates that the existing definitions of IM resonate with applying marketing-like activities internally in order to encourage employee motivation and commitment towards the effective implementation of organisational goals.

However, the notion of IM function has progressed beyond mere deployment of marketing-like programmes internally. Rafiq & Ahmed (1993, p.222) argue that IM "involves a planned effort to overcome organisational resistance to change and to

align, motivate and integrate employees towards the effective implementation of corporate and functional strategies.” In viewing IM from the functional perspective of overcoming internal resistance to change within the firm, away from the notion of ‘employee as internal customer’, Rafiq & Ahmed (1993) sought to avoid the ambiguities associated with extant IM definitions. In particular, their IM definition delimits the boundary on what IM can and cannot do by providing a base for the cross-functional integration of organisational programmes.

Corroborating Rafiq & Ahmed (1993), Schultz (2004) reminds us that internal resistance to organisational programmes and the problems of integration has hitherto marred the effective implementation of IM in most organisations. Therefore, in proposing such IM definition, Ahmed & Rafiq (1993) do not only concur with my earlier suggestion that IM should emphasize the functional role of employees, but they also attempt to present the IM concept within a frame that strives to achieve two key functional possibilities. First, using IM to achieve employee integration with corporate and organisational strategies, and secondly, using IM to equip organisations with an effective tool to overcome internal resistance to change. In sum, Gronroos (1985) and Rafiq & Ahmed (1993) both attempt to posit IM as a pragmatic tool for applying marketing-like tools internally, whilst dealing with the problem of integration and internal resistance to change.

However, a closer look at such (i.e. Gronroos, 1985 and Rafiq & Ahmed, 1993) views of IM respectively, shows inherent weaknesses, which arguably make previous attempts at defining IM less persuasive. For instance, whilst Gronroos’s (1985) IM definition fails to recognise IM as a tool for inter-functional coordination and change

implementation strategy, Rafiq & Ahmed (1993) fail to recognise IM as the use of marketing-like approach internally. Conceding to the above view, Ahmed & Rafiq (2000, p.454) propose that it would be more appropriate to define IM, “either in the Gronroos sense...or the definition of Rafiq and Ahmed is modified to incorporate the use of marketing techniques.”

In attempting such a modification with some differences in detail, Rafiq & Ahmed (2000) identify key several elements that should constitute the IM concept to include, 1) employee motivation and satisfaction, 2) customer orientation and customer satisfaction, 3) inter-functional co-ordination and integration, 4) marketing-like approach, and 5) implementation of specific corporate or functional strategies. This view of IM marks a positive departure point with the previous IM definitions as it expands the IM scope. It stipulates achieving both customer and employee satisfaction via a co-ordinated and cross-functional approach, whilst considering the interdependence of internal and external markets. Despite the apparent strengths in the above definition of IM, it situates IM and its implementation mechanism within one particular organisational strategy that is at the heart of the service organisations.

Again, the above attempt presents a narrow IM scope, as it proposes a situated view of IM. It creates ambiguity of understanding given the lack of clarity as to whether IM is relevant across all business sectors or just organisations in the services sectors. A situated view of IM does not only limit the IM function, but also ignores the fact that IM initiatives have been applied in different organisational contexts (other than the services sectors) in order to achieve desired objectives. Several studies attest to this fact. For instance, Foreman & Money (1995) assert that IM has occurred and



successfully been applied in the manufacturing sector. More over, there is evidence to suggest that IM has proven a useful marketing strategy in a socio-political context, particularly in winning support from potential voters. In a study of the social implications of political party marketing, O'Cass (2001) found that the desired political objectives of Australian Political Party (APP) were achieved by using wide generation and dissemination of market intelligence internally and acting upon the information gathered from within the members of the party to target potential voters. In other words, the APP used the information generated within, to respond to external expectations placed upon it by potential voters.

Additionally, IM initiatives have recently proven useful in the area of medical research practice (See, for example, Lee *et al.*, 1990; Oetjen & Rotarius, 2002). In a recent empirical study within a Dialysis Centre, Oetjen & Rotarius (2002) identify that IM was an integral component in understanding the interrelationships healthcare (professionals) employees have with their managers, their fellow employees, patients, as well as other key stakeholders within the centre. They found that when healthcare employees have a positive quality service experience internally, this is reflected in their positive behaviours towards their patients, who in turn, encounter a positive quality service experience, thereby, leaving both the patients and such employees satisfied.

Although the above studies present situations in which IM has successfully occurred in different (organisational) social situations, they are by no means conclusive. However, the findings of the above-mentioned studies certainly demonstrate that IM is relevant to many types of organisational contexts including the non-services sector, as existing IM definitions (e.g. Rafiq & Ahmed, 2000) fail to recognise. Hence, the

contributions from such studies (e.g. Lee *et al.*, 1990; O'Cass, 2001; Oetjen & Rotarius, 2002), as highlighted, provide the basis upon which to suggest that existing IM definitions suffer from serious limitations not just in their failure to recognise the sectoral scope of IM functions, but also in their failure to embrace the scope of IM's effectiveness across different socio-organisational contexts.

Based on the foregoing, it is argued that any proposed IM definition must first recognise the scope of IM function and its effectiveness by first incorporating the experiences and the perceptions of practitioners' with which IM activity is self-evident. Such notion of IM should be approached broadly within the context of demonstrating its outcomes and functions as an effective organisational tool. Essentially, this study takes the view:

In order to overcome some of the problems with current conceptualisations I suggest that the Internal Marketing Concept is defined more broadly and without reference to the primacy of employees. In fact, I suggest that it is important to see Internal Marketing in terms of its outcomes, that is, the implementation of marketing and other programmes rather than being concerned with specifics of whether the employee is "king" (Rafiq & Ahmed, 1993, p.230).

Providing a view of IM from the above-mentioned starting point will require a study anchored on the experiences of practitioners with which IM activity is salient. However, attention is next focused on examining the key empirical studies operationalising the IM measurement construct.

**Table 2.1: Extant IM studies stressing very different notions and definitions of IM and nature of study**

Author(s)	IM definitions	Study
Berry <i>et al.</i> , (1976)	IM is a marketing strategy targeted at front-line personnel.  IM results in job satisfaction  IM influences employee motivation	Normative
Sasser & Arbeit (1976)	IM accords primacy to the employee market by viewing their job as products and employees as customers.  IM supports the notion that firms should first market their jobs to its employees in order to be able to sell its services to external customers	Normative
Berry (1981, 1984)	IM is viewing 'employees as internal customers'  IM is viewing 'jobs as internal products'  IM results in overall customer satisfaction	Normative case study
Gronroos (1981; 1985)	IM integrates the different business functions  IM makes the personnel motivated  IM creates customer-conscious, market-orientation and sales-mindedness among the personnel  IM can be implemented at the strategic and tactical levels of the organisation  IM is a managerial philosophy  IM creates opportunity for good interactive marketing performance in the buyer-seller relationship.	Normative conceptual
Flipo (1986)	IM creates enthusiasm for organisational programmes. IM influences consistent marketing behaviour among contact personnel.	Normative conceptual
Gummesson (1987)	IM transports external marketing activities to the internal market of employees to achieve overall customer satisfaction.  IM is an "integrator"  IM strongly supports the concept of the "internal customer"	Conceptual case Study
Tansuhaj <i>et al.</i> , (1987; 1988; 1991)	Results in employee commitment and job satisfaction  IM is implemented mainly by marketers or marketing experts within the firm	Empirical case study
Barnes (1989)	IM complements external marketing efforts  IM is directed at producing and maintaining a motivated and satisfied group of employees	Normative

George (1990)	IM is a philosophy for managing human resources based on a marketing perspective	Normative
	IM is a holistic management framework for integration	
	IM enhances effective internal exchange of values between the organisation and its employees groups	
Collins & Payne (1991)	IM is vitally concerned with the management of human resources	Normative
	IM is a form of marketing where both the 'customer' and the 'supplier' are inside the organisation	
Rafiq & Ahmed (1993)	IM is a planned effort towards the effective strategy implementation	Normative
	IM involves a planned effort to overcome organisational resistance to change	
Greene <i>et al.</i> , (1994)	IM is the key to superior service performance	Normative
	IM involves the promotion of the firm and its products in the firm's employee market.	
	IM is applying the philosophy and practices of marketing to the people who serve the external customer	
Varey (1995a; 1995b)	IM is a management philosophy for both motivation and support	Conceptual
	IM encourages market-oriented management framework	
	IM is the process of "selling" customer service to employees	
	IM aims to change attitudes and behaviour	
Ahmed & Rafiq (1995)	IM is a process of achieving employee commitment	Conceptual case study
	IM is a philosophy that involves the planned use of marketing techniques internally	
Foreman & Money (1995)	IM is a useful and effective metaphor for seeing the customer in every individual and in every organisational unit that is within the business.	Normative empirical
Piercy (1995; 1996)	IM is an operational approach to creating a balance between both internal and external customer satisfaction	Normative conceptual
Money & Foreman (1996)	IM encourages the marketing of products first to the employee internal market before external market	
	IM embraces three factors of development, reward and vision essential to organisational success	
Ballantyne (1997)	IM is a relationship process to build internal network of Relationships	Conceptual case study
Caruana & Calleya (1998)	IM creates an internal environment in which customer-consciousness pervades the personnel function	Normative empirical

Hogg <i>et al.</i> , (1998)	<p>IM improves internal communication and customer consciousness among employees</p> <p>IM is useful in terms of ‘enculturation’ and during organisational change</p> <p>IM enhances a two-way communication process between management and the workforce.</p>	Exploratory Empirical
Quester & Kelly (1999)	<p>IM is used to develop and motivate employees towards customer-consciousness.</p> <p>IM is used to improve customer satisfaction via employee-customer interface</p>	Exploratory Empirical
Varey & Lewis (1999)	IM is a goal-oriented social process to create rapid strategic organisational change in response to market demands at both the macro and micro levels of society.	Normative
Brooks <i>et al.</i> , (1999)	<p>IM entails the management of relationships between internal customers and their internal suppliers</p> <p>IM is the process of creating market conditions internally in order to meet internal customers needs and wants.</p>	Conceptual
Ewing & Caruana (1999)	IM fosters effective human resources management especially in Public Sector Management.	Empirical
Rafiq & Ahmed (2000)	<p>IM is a mechanism to overcome organisational resistance to change.</p> <p>IM is a mechanism for internal alignment</p> <p>IM motivates the individuals towards implementing corporate strategies</p> <p>IM co-ordinates and integrates cross-functional efforts</p> <p>IM creates motivated and customer-oriented employees</p>	Normative conceptual
Ballantyne (2000b)	IM is a strategy for relationship development for the purpose of knowledge renewal.	Conceptual case study
Davis (2001)	IM is how performance is structured and how managers and organisation members behave and relate to each other.	Normative
Ahmed & Rafiq (2003)	<p>IM is a holistic in approach to strategy implementation</p> <p>IM is a “total” managerial approach for co-ordination and integration</p> <p>IM is the enabling agency for building individual creativity organisational competences</p> <p>IM is an emotionally intelligent philosophy for the scrutiny of both employee and organisational needs</p> <p>IM places people centre stage in the equation of organisational success</p> <p>IM influences the formation of “corporate identity” and “collective mind” within the organisation</p> <p>IM is built on “trust” and “partnership”</p>	Normative

	<p>IM identifies and removes barriers that divide employees and factionalise organisational action.</p> <p>IM aligns the individual into a collective unit</p> <p>IM generates involvement and employee commitment to organisational programmes</p>	
Ahmed <i>et al.</i> , (2003)	IM creates high-performance work systems by managing the interdependent elements of the IM mix in order to create and achieve greater individual and organisational competencies and ultimately business performance	Conceptual empirical
Ballantyne (2003)	<p>IM is the relationship and knowledge management required for the “new” organisation.</p> <p>IM creates value for an organisation, its customers and its employees</p> <p>IM is a relationship-mediated strategy for the purpose of knowledge renewal.</p>	Normative
De Bussy <i>et al.</i> , (2003)	<p>IM harnesses stakeholder needs in order to reflect those needs in the exchange relationships that go on within the business.</p> <p>IM ensures that every stakeholder have legitimate rights that corporations must respect in the formulation and the implementation of policies</p>	Empirical
Morgan (2004)	IM is the appropriate framework to maintain a balance between IT and other supporting functions in any organisation.	Normative
Schultz (2004; 2006)	<p>IM include activities, actions, and managerial directions an organisation implements in order to encourage and generate employees and other stakeholder support for every organisational programmes and processes.</p> <p>IM is as critical as external marketing, even more crucial than external marketing</p>	Conceptual case study
Gounaris (2006; 2008)	<p>IM is the synthesis of specific beliefs with specific “marketing-like” behaviours</p> <p>Internal Market Orientation (IMO) is IM measurement construct similar to Market Orientation (MO) used in the external market.</p> <p>IMO promotes the need to plan and build effective relationships between employees and the organisation.</p> <p>IM linked to employee job satisfaction</p> <p>IM linked to empowerment</p>	Conceptual empirical

## **2.9 IM Measurement: critical examination of key empirical studies and their operationalisation of IM**

In this section, I will critically examine the key empirical studies operationalising the IM concept in purely academic and quantitative terms with a focus on *Ahmed et al., (2003)*, *Lings, (2004)* and *Gounaris (2006; 2008)*. I will argue that the alternative use of qualitative-phenomenological mode of inquiry promises a way in which to understand IM in terms of its outcomes and functions, as suggested above, rather than with specifics of whether or not the employee deserves primacy. This line of reasoning is more likely to provide greater specificity and comprehension of IM.

Whilst it is fair to acknowledge that most existing studies (see, for example, *Ahmed et al., 2003; Lings, 2004; Lings & Greenley, 2005; Gounaris, 2006; 2008*) operationalising the IM concept have indeed a fair degree of consistency, there is confusion surrounding the findings of such studies in terms of their organisational relevance. *Rafiq & Ahmed (2003)* and *Schultz (2004)* recognise this view, and call for a structured and all-inclusive approach to IM research. This warrants a thorough critical examination of such studies with an aim towards providing useful insights for (IM measurement) any future IM construct development. This is necessary given the fact that the way in which IM is operationalised in academic terms is relevant to its practice in the organisation, as it provides the guide for its implementation by managers.

Several studies (e.g. *Ahmed et al., 2003; Gounaris, 2006; 2008*) attempting to operationalise the IM concept have generally progressed from the theoretical assumption that an organisation needs to be considered as a marketplace, where employees are viewed as internal customers and internal suppliers of work-related

tasks. However, one of the major problems confronting IM as an area of academic research activity and management practice is the difficulty in its implementation mechanism. Organisations are faced with difficulty in their implementation of the IM concept, and this in part, can be blamed on the lack of clear guidelines as to what activities should constitute IM and those that should not (Ahmed and Rafiq, 2003). This not only highlights this study's focus, but also reflects the overall mood of the current debate. A study providing the nature and the structure of IM from individuals who have had the experience of IM will no doubt provide new insights, and perhaps, explain why organisations find it difficult to implement IM successfully. The findings from such a study will certainly be useful in identifying and subsequently addressing the problems organisations encounter in their IM implementation. Developing such an empirical study from a qualitative descriptive phenomenological framework remains the focus of my investigation of the IM concept.

### **2.9.1 Empirical studies and their IM operationalisation**

The majority of the existing empirical studies purportedly addressing the operationalisation of the IM concept for organisational use tend to derive their measurement frameworks from two established starting points. Firstly, the adaptation of the traditional (4Ps) marketing mix elements to the internal context, and secondly, the adaptation of the market orientation (MO) construct as articulated by Kohli & Jaworski (1990) and Narver & Slater (1990). Kohli & Jaworski (1990) initially developed a model of MO in which they identify the behavioural components required in order to create value for external customers. In keeping with this perspective, existing IM measurement studies (e.g. Piercy & Morgan, 1990; Ahmed *et al.*, 2003; Lings, 2004; Lings & Greenley, 2005; Gounaris, 2006; 2008) have sought to develop



an IM construct in the hope of creating internal customer value, and ultimately, achieving organisational performance.

For instance, in operationalizing the IM mix [Piercy & Morgan \(1990\)](#) adapt the traditional marketing mix elements to the internal market of employees in order to develop an IM mix. They claim that jobs are the internal products that employees are offered, and price represents the resource skills (which have a tangible value attached to it by employers) that employees exchange for their jobs, whilst promotion represents all internal communication (e.g. memos and newsletters) processes within the business. Similarly, [Ahmed \*et al.\*, \(2003\)](#) identify a concept of the IM mix or set of controllable instruments (elements) inside the organisation that can be effectively used to influence and motivate employees towards customer orientation. Drawing insights from the 'organisational influence systems' as articulated by [Galpin \(1997\)](#), [Ahmed \*et al.\*, \(2003\)](#) conceptualise components of an IM mix that constitute organisational competencies, which mediate the relationship between IM and organisational performance.

[Lings \(2004\)](#) adapts the market orientation (MO) construct developed by [Narver & Slater \(1990\)](#) to articulate a path model of IM labelled internal market orientation (IMO). Following [Lings \(2004\)](#), [Lings & Greenley \(2005\)](#) attempt to operationalise an IM construct by focusing on the effectiveness of using IMO to assess a firm's IM effort. Lately, [Gounaris \(2006; 2008\)](#) provides an IM construct by further assessing how a company's IMO influences the effectiveness of the firm's strategic response towards achieving employee job satisfaction. Attention will now turn to critical

examination of the key empirical studies operationalising the IM concept with focus on *Ahmed et al., (2003)*, *Lings (2004)* and *Gounaris (2006; 2008)*.

#### **2.10 Ahmed et al., (2003) and the IM mix – *summary of study***

*Ahmed et al., (2003)* is amongst a number of studies that investigate the nature of IM operationalisation. They note that there is “little systematic work on how IM actually works in practice” (*Ahmed et al., 2003, p.1221*). They also observe that there is very little agreement on what mix of IM programmes to assemble in order to effectively influence and motivate employees towards customer orientation. Their observation is pertinent to current issues facing IM research in general, and therefore, deserves some attention.

They began by identifying a number of key controllable elements inside the organisation that can be used to influence and motivate employees towards customer orientation. They draw prominently from a wide range of the management literature that relates to various functional perspectives encompassing HRM and the marketing disciplines. These include organisational activities, such as, communication, training, education, and information, which underpin the work of *Gumesson (1991)*. They also maintain that the traditional functions of HRM e.g. attracting, hiring, and employee retention should be used for IM, albeit, from a marketing perspective. In suggesting such a viewpoint, they extensively draw upon the works of *Tansuhaj et al., (1988)* and *Gronroos (1985)* to justify their theoretical standpoint.

In operationalising the IM construct however, *Ahmed et al., (2003)* identify eleven controllable elements labelled the IM mix, which they note influence the key target employees as internal customers equivalent to the key customer segments in external

marketing. They also identify that such an IM mix may include ‘soft’ and ‘hard’ aspects of organisational functions, which are “implied as comprising tools for developing a successful marketing programme” (Ahmed *et al.*, 2003, p.1225). In other words, organisations can use IM to create “high-performance work systems by managing the interdependent elements of the IM mix in order to create and achieve greater individual and organisational competencies and ultimately business performance” (Ahmed *et al.*, 2003, p.1223). Such conclusion appears to contribute substantially to the understanding of IM principles. However, given the importance of developing an IM measurement within the context of this study’s focus, scrutiny of the key theoretical premise and assumptions that underpin the IM mix as articulated by Ahmed *et al.*, (2003) becomes imperative.

#### **2.10.1 Issues arising from Ahmed *et al.*, (2003) IM mix**

This section will critically examine how Ahmed *et al.*, (2003) developed their IM mix. They adapt the theoretical principles from the model of organisational influence systems as devised by Galpin (1997)<sup>4</sup> to develop their IM mix. This model is essentially designed for the execution of new business strategy through realignment of its components, and therefore, neither relates to nor addresses specific IM objectives and outcomes. If anything, adopting such a posture in operationalising an IM construct detracts from an earlier notion in which Rafiq & Ahmed (1993) rightly suggest that what is needed for effective IM (Mix) operationalisation is to develop models which specifically address the issues that relate to the level(s) at which relevant actions can enhance effective IM implementation in organisations. Therefore, it remains to be

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<sup>4</sup>Galpin’s model shows that in creating necessary competencies to influence employee behaviour, organisations need to “realign” the components of the influence systems in order to be able to execute such a new strategy (Galpin, 1997, p. 13). He further asserts that his model is also useful to the extent it is used for “judging the way different management processes, called influence systems, interact to create behaviour” (Galpin 1997, p.12).

seen how Galpin's model of organisational influence systems addresses the criterion as indicated above by *Ahmed et al., (2003)*. Although some of the components of the organisational influence systems e.g. reward and training constitute part of a broader IM perspective, the major focus of *Galpin's (1997)* model is for achieving new strategic direction for organisations. In other words, the theoretical model as adapted by *Ahmed et al., (2003)* to anchor their IM mix clearly does not specify how it can benefit or complement the organisation's IM efforts in creating both internal and external customer value.

In keeping with the resource based view (RBV) of the firm, *Ahmed et al., (2003)* further assert that adjusting the IM mix serves as a means of creating organisational competencies, and hence, improve business performance. The RBV is based upon the notion that a firm performs well over time as it develops a distinctive or core competence that allows it to achieve a competitive advantage. Core competence however, is posited "as an organisation-based capability that combines and integrates the skills of a set of practitioners working across business units, and creates superior value for customers" (*Ahmed et al., 2003, p.1224*). Based on the above notion, *Ahmed et al.*, proceed to identify customer orientation, market orientation, and employee satisfaction as three indicators of organisational competencies that mediate the relationship between IM and organisational performance.

In positing such a theoretical standpoint, *Ahmed et al., (2003)* however, fail to clarify or clearly establish how the above variables (i.e. customer orientation, market orientation, and employee satisfaction) are inter-linked or correlate with IM strategies in the task of mediating the relationship between IM and organisational performance.

It must be recalled that Rafiq & Ahmed (1993) had earlier argued theoretically, for the need to develop specific inter-functional IM linkages and actions necessary for effective IM (operationalisation) implementation in the organisation. Contrary to such a viewpoint, they declare instead, “market orientation mediates this relationship [i.e. relationship between IM and organisational performance] by ensuring that the organisation is highly aware and responsive to customer needs and competitors’ capabilities” (Ahmed *et al.*, 2003, p.1226).

Thus, the defining weakness of the IM mix articulated by Ahmed *et al.*, (2003) is not only evident in the recurrent ambiguity in their theory use and construction, but also the complexity and the apparent lack of consistency in correlation of constructs pertinent to IM (operationalisation) strategies. For instance, the resultant emphasis on the external marketing variables employed, such as, market orientation, raises the issue as to whether the inter-functional linkages that comprise their IM mix seem more apposite to the external market(*ing*) context than the internal market of employees. Clearly, the pattern of (theory) adaptation and model construction suggests that the components that comprise of their IM mix lean more heavily on external marketing strategies than IM strategies.

Underlining such a pattern, for example, is their use of customer orientation and market orientation constructs as indicator variables of organisational competencies that mediate the relationship between IM (mix) and organisational performance. Although customer orientation as a construct has been previously adapted to the IM situation, as in the case of Conduit & Mavondo (2001), their pattern of adaptation and its relationship with creating internal customer value were clearly defined and situated

within the context of specific IM strategies, unlike what is observed in the composition of the IM mix devised by Ahmed *et al.*, (2003). Moreover, there is overwhelming evidence (See, for example, Narver & Slater, 1990; Kohli & Jaworski, 1993) to suggest that customer orientation is a behavioural component of market orientation closely linked with the external market relationship dynamics. Hence, by their own admission, Ahmed *et al.*, (2003, p. 1237) suggest, “future IM research should replicate their study in order to establish the reliability of the measurement instruments used.”

### **2.11 Lings (2004) and his IM operationalisation – *summary of study***

Lings (2004) adapts the MO construct as developed by Narver & Slater (1990) to the internal market (of employees) in order to anchor his IM operationalisation. He identifies that IM implementation procedure is still chaotic given “there is no generally accepted instrument to measure the concept or to examine the quantitative impact of internal marketing” (Lings, 2004, p. 406). Lings also emphasises the need to develop procedures for a single clear IM terminology in order to make it easier to understand the implications of IM practice. Thus, he began by developing a path model for the operationalisation of a valid IM construct by examining the contribution of IM in developing an internal direction for the firm. In articulating a path for IM operationalisation that closely parallels the (external) MO construct, he devises three behavioural dimensions adapted from the (external) MO construct developed by Narver & Slater (1990), and labels it internal market orientation (IMO) construct.

Lings's IMO construct has three key behavioural dimensions, including internal market research (identify exchanges, external employee market conditions, segment internal market, strategies for each segment), communications (between management and employees, between managers about the wants and needs of employees), and response behaviour (encompassing job design, training, management consideration, bonus and salary system). Lings's attempt is indeed commendable, and significant in two ways. Firstly, his study was the first to devise an IM measurement construct labelled IMO. Secondly, his IMO construct is the basis upon which subsequent IM studies (e.g. [Lings & Greenley, 2005](#); [Gounaris, 2006](#); [2008](#)) have built upon in order to operationalise different models of IM.

#### **2.11.1 Issues arising from the IMO construct articulated by Lings (2004)**

Issues to be reviewed under this section relate to the theoretical premise and assumptions underpinning the IMO construct devised by [Lings \(2004\)](#). First, he asserts that recent “advances in the operationalization of marketing using market orientation typify the enduring reluctance of marketing academics to incorporate internal considerations in the marketing concept” ([Lings, 2004, p.406](#)). The key phrase – ‘enduring reluctance of marketing academics’, suggests implicitly that the wider MO literature from which he adapts his IMO construct negates IM considerations. In addition, the assertion by [Lings's \(2004, p.407\)](#) that “market orientation, as an operationalization of the marketing concept, does not have the internal focus on employees” is unwarranted.

The above assertions present a distorted view of the wider MO literature vis a vis the IM concept given the fact that the MO construct cannot be implemented successfully in the organisation without a focus on employees. Narver & Slater (1990) buttress this point, and emphasize that the effectiveness of the third behavioural component of the MO construct i.e. interfunctional coordination requires the contribution of individuals in the seller firm in order to bring about effective inter-functional coordination.

According to Narver & Slater (1990), the MO construct entails:

the coordinated utilisation of company resources in creating superior value for target customers. Any point in the buyer's value chain affords an opportunity for a seller to create value for the buyer firm. Therefore, any individual in any function in a seller firm can potentially contribute to the creation of value for buyers. Creating value for buyers is much more than a "marketing function;" rather, a seller's creation of value for buyers is analogous to a symphony orchestra in which the contribution of each subgroup is tailored and integrated by a conductor – with synergistic effect (Narver & Slater, 1990, p. 22).

Clearly, the above view provides the frame through which to challenge further the basis upon which Lings's basic theoretical assumptions vis-à-vis his IM operationalisation rest. Besides, it is not difficult to see that the theoretical underpinnings of his IMO construct sit uneasily with the MO measurement construct upon which much of the former is derived from. Thus, raising the question as to whether Lings draws accurately and consistently from the wider MO literature in support of his IM operationalisation. Based upon these inherent flaws, it will be useful to emphasize that the wider body of MO literature indeed supports and recognizes IM considerations contrary to Lings's assertions. Perhaps, further explanation relating to this view is warranted in order to shed further light on the flaws associated with the IMO construct articulated by Lings (2004).



Narver & Slater (1990) imply the need to incorporate IM principles in the implementation of the MO measurement construct through the effective utilisation and integration of employees' resources. They caution against narrowly focusing market intelligence, a component of the MO measurement construct, only on external customers and competitors. Contrary to Lings's (2004) assertion, the above view indicates that IM considerations, through its focus on employees, are pivotal to the value creation process executed via the MO measurement construct.

Deshpande et al., (1993) accentuate the above viewpoint by stressing that the interests of other stakeholders in the implementation of the MO construct must be recognised. In other words, the scope of the effectiveness in the implementation of the MO construct encompasses not just employees, but all stakeholders to the business. Stakeholders involve all parties to a business including of course the employees within the business. Thus, clearly, Lings (2004) appears to bypass the substantive body of knowledge in MO research emphasizing the importance of incorporating not just the IM of employees, but also other stakeholders, such as, suppliers and distributors, who Rafiq & Ahmed (1993) identify fall within the internal market environment.

Furthermore, a conclusion Lings (2004) reaches elsewhere in his study is relevant to understanding the theoretical basis for his IM operationalisation. Citing Berry (1984) and Gronross (1982), he concludes that the foundation of his IMO is focused upon "customer contact personnel and the philosophy of treating these employees as customers of the firm's jobs" (Lings 2004, p. 408). Implicit is the notion that the (IMO construct) IM concept is only useful to the extent it enables the contact personnel to deliver on their jobs. In justifying such a narrow view, Lings claims that the majority

of the academic literature addressing IMO would view IM in this way. Yet again, this shows the absence of sufficient recognition of the wider body of IM literature, and therefore, weakens the theory base underpinning Lings IM operationalisation.

Most studies (e.g. Ahmed & Rafiq, 1995; 2003; Schultz, 2004; Gounaris, 2006; 2008) in IM including of course, Berry (1981) and Gronroos (1981; 1985) which Lings draw from take a contrary view. If anything, the above mentioned IM studies caution on the danger in limiting the IM function to the extent it only enhances the effectiveness of contact personnel. The academic research in IM has progressed beyond the view that IM entails considering just the needs of contact personnel. For instance, in operationalising IM, Gounaris (2006; 2008) makes the point that IM is applicable to all manner of employees under a broadened internal relationship-marketing paradigm regardless of hierarchies and departmental constraints. IM is a management philosophy that embodies all employees' actions and recognises such actions as pivotal to overall firm performance. The broadened IM literature incorporating the TQM philosophy (which Lings refers in his study) underscores this viewpoint. Several studies (e.g. Rafiq & Ahmed, 1993; Barnes *et al.*, 2004) particularly stress that TQM is vital and closely linked to IM, as TQM deals with the relationships amongst employees and not between employees and the external customers.

Lings (2004, p.407) concedes the above views as he identifies that TQM is closely linked to IM whilst highlighting that, "by increasing the quality of service transaction with internal customers, organisations can positively influence the quality of service transactions with external customers." Clearly, inconsistency in theory construction and model development is a dominant feature of Lings (2004) attempt at IM

operationalisation, which leaves one in doubt as to the reliability and robustness of his IM measurement construct as propounded.

## **2.12 Gounaris (2006; 2008) and his IM operationalisation – *Summary of study***

Gounaris (2006; 2008) is the latest in a string of studies attempting to operationalise IM measurement construct. His studies seek to tackle the perceived flaws associated with the study undertaken by Lings (2004). Gounaris (2006) began by tracing some key developments that have shaped research in IM, whilst emphasizing the need to adopt a holistic approach to conducting IM measurement studies. He identifies that IM has progressed from a firm's effort towards satisfying the needs of contact-employees to the management of relationships amongst co-workers through encouraging customer orientation throughout the firm. He also identifies that the lack of validation of existing IM measurement studies remains the major source of problem in implementing IM in organisations. Based on these factors, he proposes that through the adoption of IMO, IM strategies could become more effective in strengthening its competitive position in the external market. Specifically, he asserts that "companies cannot effectively practice IM unless they have first developed an Internal Market Orientation (IMO) analogous to the market-orientation" (Gounaris, 2008, p.72).

Thus, according to Gounaris (2006), adopting the IMO would signal a company's orientation regarding the employees market and commitment towards understanding employees' values in order to be responsive to their individual needs. In his view, organisations can demonstrate this as well as strengthen their competitiveness by "collecting relevant internal-market intelligence, disseminating this intelligence between employees and supervisors, and responding to this intelligence with

appropriate IM strategies” (Gounaris’s 2006, p.436). Such a theoretical starting point is indeed relevant, and therefore deserves some recognition. However, given that studies in IM operationalisation are of relevance to providing a better frame through which to understand this study’s focus in attempting to describe the structure of IM, Gounaris’s (2006; 2008) claims warrant some scrutiny.

#### **2.12.1 Issues arising from Gounaris (2006; 2008) and his IMO construct:**

A thorough review of Gounaris (2006; 2008) suggests a myriad of issues. First, he provides a definition of IM measurement as “the synthesis of specific beliefs with specific “marketing-like” behaviours” (Gounaris, 2006, p.436), without specifying what constitutes such specific beliefs and its corresponding marketing-like behaviours. According to Gounaris (2006; 2008), IMO encourages and promotes the need to build effective relationships between the firm’s employees and management, the basis of which rests upon the firm’s commitment towards producing value for its internal customers in much the same manner as commitment is required in order to deliver value to external customers.

Producing value for the organisation’s internal customers, as Gounaris (2006) suggests, is vital since employees (as internal customers) are perceived to influence the value creation and delivery process that affect the external customers regardless of such employee’s hierarchical position in the firm. More so, providing value for the organisation’s internal customers, as Gounaris (2008, p.72) subsequently corroborates, “ensures that the company’s strategic response to the needs of the internal market becomes more effective in comparison to companies that are only externally focused.” Such a conclusion appears to be consistent with the wider IM literature (See for

example, Berry, 1981; 1984; Gronroos, 1981; 1985; Rafiq & Ahmed, 1993; Lings, 1999; 2004) examining the effect of employee performance on overall organisational performance, and therefore, warrants recognition.

However, a number of unsubstantiated claims are evident in Gounaris (2006; 2008). His latest paper appears to be a follow up from the study undertaken in 2006, in which he generally posits that understanding employees' values is a major priority for the internal-market oriented company. He therefore, asserts that "collecting relevant internally-related intelligence and disseminating this intelligence between employees and supervisors should clearly be important pillars of IMO" (Gounaris, 2008; p.73). However, his previous study in 2006 reveals inconsistencies in relation to the above theoretical premise. He asserts, for instance, that "internal intelligence is a precondition for segmentation which follows", arguing that, "the same is also true for the dimension of *developing strategies for specific segments*" (Gounaris, 2006, p.436). It is unclear what point Gounaris intends to draw out from such inconsistent assertions, except perhaps, an indication that intelligence generation is a prerequisite for internal market segmentation.

However, since Gounaris (2006) initially sought to enhance the study undertaken by Lings (2004), it would be useful to put into perspective Lings's (2004) position on the issue of internal market segmentation and internal market research. Such a perspective will provide a frame through which to better evaluate Gounaris's (See Gounaris, 2006) propositional logic on the idea of intelligence generation vis a vis internal market segmentation. Lings (2004) identifies that the purpose of the segmentation of the internal market is for conducting internal market research, which comprises of the

generation of information based on (1) understanding labour market conditions, (2) recognition of specific internal segments of employees with different characteristics in order to better identify their various needs, and (3) designing strategies to suit internal customers.

Briefly, internal market research is generally perceived and aimed at securing a good knowledge and understanding of employees' various needs as well as characteristics in their satisfaction levels (Berry, 1981). Therefore, internal market research should indeed precede the segmentation of the internal market of employee, which Gounaris (2006) fails to draw out forcefully. For ease of comparison and clarity of presentation, Gounaris's (2006) and Lings's (2004) models of IMO are represented in diagrams 2.1 and 2.2, pages 81 and 82 respectively.

In addition, it is pertinent to add that Lings (2004) and consequently, Gounaris (2006) derive their notions of segmentation of the internal marketplace originally from Heskett's (1987)<sup>5</sup> concept of inner-directed vision. The notion of inner-directed vision encompasses all the internal marketing approaches (including internal market research and segmentation) designed to enhance the implementation of the IM philosophy. Yet, Gounaris's (2006) suggests the need to use an internal market survey to gauge competition in the external marketplace, contrary to the idea which underpins Heskett's notion of inner-directed vision, and consequently, the credibility of the IMO measurement construct as articulated. This is because using internal market

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<sup>5</sup> Heskett (1987) recognises the importance of an inner-directed vision with the same basic elements as the (strategic service vision) external service vision. These basic elements include targeting important employees segments, development of a service concept designed with the needs of employees in mind, codification of an operating system strategy to support the service concept, and design of a service delivery system to support the operating strategy. Thus, in Heskett's view, integrating these elements will lead to efficiency and the opportunity to develop shared goals and values within the organisation.

survey in the manner suggested by Gounaris (2006) fails to highlight the fact that internal survey must focus first on understanding the important employees' needs in order to provide the basis for the effective execution of internal market segmentation.

Rafiq & Ahmed (1993) clarify this point by arguing that (internal markets) employees need to be segmented along motivational lines, such as, employee benefits, as well as their functional roles. Focusing internal market research on understanding important employees' needs in order to understand clearly the basis for the effective execution of internal market segmentation is more relevant to IM strategic focus, than when such survey is otherwise focused on the competition in the external marketplace, as suggested by Gounaris (2006). However, in an attempt to disavow his initial position regarding internal survey vis a vis internal market segmentation, Gounaris (2008, p. 73) recently concedes that "segmenting a market, as a process, requires that intelligence regarding the market is already available. Segmentation appears thus to be a consequent behaviour, not part of the effort to collect market intelligence." Such latest claim would appear to be consistent with Heskett's concept of the inner-directed vision, and therefore, in line with the overall IM strategic focus, as argued.

Thirdly, Gounaris (2008) hypothesised that employee empowerment would influence positively their job satisfaction. In employing the empowerment construct as an anchor to hypothesise a positive relationship with employee job satisfaction, he fails to clarify the nature of the empowerment construct to which he refers. Thus, apart from the resultant ambiguity in such a failure, there is a difficulty in understanding which is the variant of the empowerment construct upon which his IMO is anchored. The marketing literature on the use of empowerment as a construct in management

and organisational research emphasizes (see, for example, Conger and Kanugo, 1988) the need to delineate the construct of empowerment to which one refers given the fact that it carries two-dimensional meaning. This is necessary in order to avoid ambiguity of understanding its use in theory construction and/or model development.

The two-dimensional meaning of empowerment as a variable includes empowerment as a relational construct and empowerment as a motivational construct. Empowerment as a relational construct is based primarily on the notion of a manager sharing authority with subordinates via delegation of authority. On the other hand, as Conger and Kanugo (1988) note, empowerment as a motivational construct relates to a situation in which employees are enabled, through enhancing their personal efficacy and their individual abilities to excel and perform well even in an otherwise challenging situations. Therefore, such lack of clarity in IM operationalisation hinders one's ability to understand precisely the (effectiveness) behavioural components of the IMO construct as propounded by Gounaris (2006). This is an indication of narrow understanding of the wider marketing literature on the use of empowerment variable in model development, as Conger & Kanugo (1988) make clear.

Fourth, Gounaris (2006) asserts that lack of IM perspective on cultural infrastructure is the major reason why IM has not yet taken a firm root in organisations. Again, such a theoretical assertion cannot hold up to any rigorous scrutiny. It fails to take sufficient account of the wider IM literature that examines the relationship between IM and organisational culture. Although the relationship between IM and culture that exists within the organisation has yet to be established empirically, some studies (e.g. Rafiq & Ahmed, 2003; Papasolomou-Doukakis & Kitchen, 2004) do provide the



conceptual framework through which to put into perspective the issue of organisational culture vis a vis the IM domain field. Gounaris (2006; 2008) in no way refers to such relevant studies, instead, he narrowly concludes that there is “only one reference to a cultural aspect...to produce value for its internal market” (Gounaris, 2006, p.435). Such a claim distorts the relevant views on IM in relation to the discussion of organisational culture.

For example, Ahmed and Rafiq (2003) and Papasolomou-Doukakis & Kitchen, (2004) particularly highlight the effectiveness of IM in producing internal value for the organisation from an organisational culture perspective. Ahmed and Rafiq, (2003, p.1182) note that IM examines how “individuals and their environment receive shape and meaning in their continuous mutual interaction.” On the other hand, Papasolomou-Doukakis & Kitchen (2004) identify that IM is a managerial activity geared towards creating a culture of mutual relationships and structures within the organisation, governed by the same exchange logic in the external markets. Similarly, the notion of customer-consciousness, sales-mindedness, and customer-orientation are widely perceived as the IM cultural artefacts that underlie the marketing behaviours of organisations that practice IM. These perceived IM artefacts manifest in mutual interactive behaviours and relationships amongst employees and between employees and the external customers, as identified by Gronroos (1985).

In retrospect, the possibility of constituting an IM construct from external marketing dynamics was first muted by Mohr-Jackson (1991). She suggests that the market orientation construct can only be effectively operationalised by recognising that employees are ‘core pillars’ in creating value for external customers. Therefore, she

sought to broaden the MO construct by incorporating an internal customer perspective. Since then, unfortunately, not much has been achieved by way of providing a strong foundation upon which to articulate and understand precisely what constitutes IM or the nature and structure of its operationalisation. Clearly, the inherent weaknesses as well as the nature of research approaches associated with existing studies operationalising the IM concept are to be blamed. Lamenting the inherent weaknesses associated with the research approaches of such previous IM studies, Rafiq & Ahmed (1993) comment:

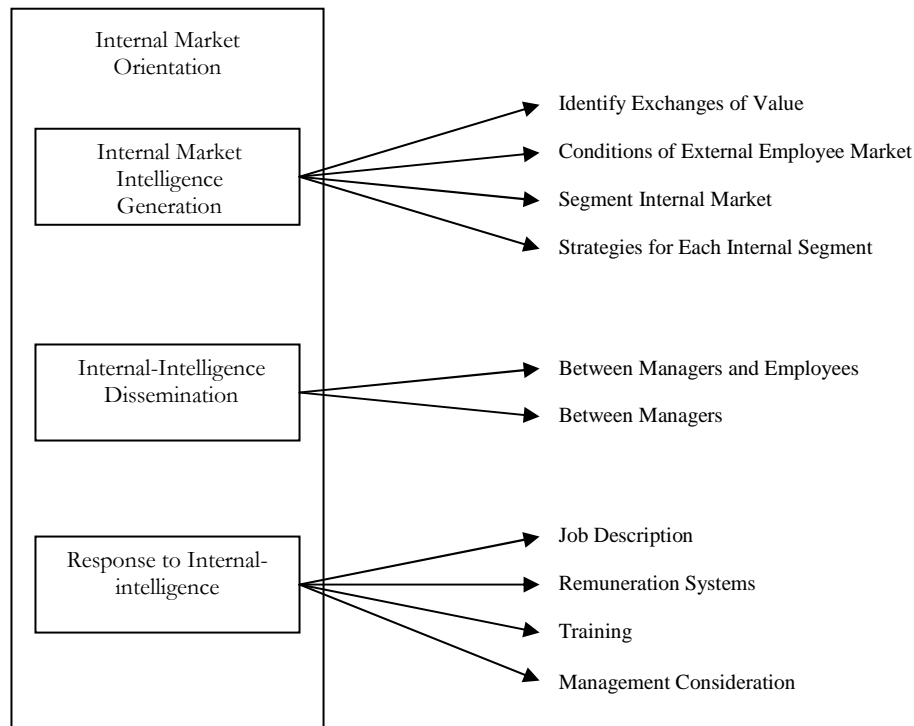
the simple or ad-hoc transfer of marketing concepts and techniques is not likely to produce results until precise specification of how the marketing concepts can be operationalised in the internal context. Models, therefore, need to be developed which specifically address the issues of the level(s) at which internal marketing is relevant and the inter-functional linkages and actions necessary for effective implementation of the internal marketing concept (Rafiq & Ahmed, 1993, p. 231).

Similarly, Varey & Lewis (1999, p.939) warn that IM “cannot be viewed as simply the application of marketing concepts within the organisation.” Others (e.g. Schultz, 2004, p.119) starkly caution that continuing IM theorising without “end-user research” to specify what would or could provide a better understanding of IM structure is “doomed to failure.”

The above view resonates with and indeed reinforces the overall mood of the current debate. These again highlight the need to first direct research attention in IM domain field towards providing a better understanding of the IM structure, especially, from the perspectives of practitioners who encounter IM in their everyday organisational lives. The qualitative-phenomenological research approach suitably lends itself to the task of providing such focus of IM investigation, as it provides the mechanism through which

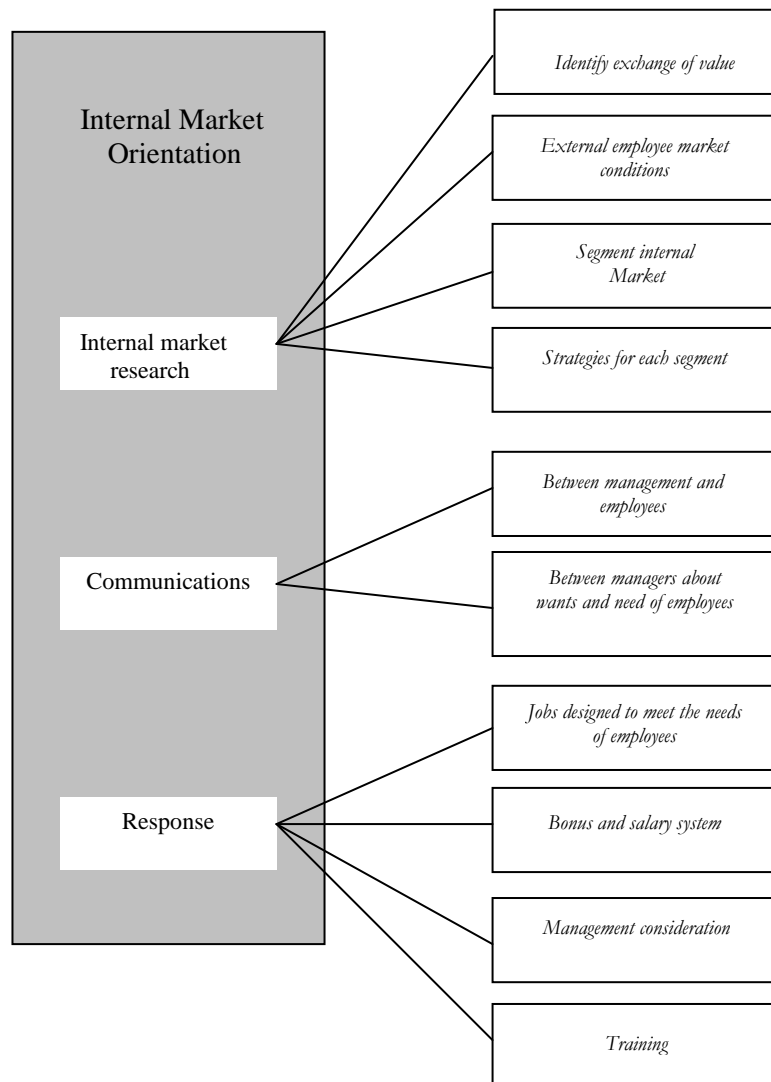
to probe the views of individuals who use and/or experience IM in their organisations. The findings from such a phenomenological inquiry can be useful subsequently, in theory construction and model development via a quantitative process. However, the next section presents the competing schools of thought in IM research as well as a diagram classifying the core and the differences in opinion as to what constitutes IM.

**Diagram 2.1:** IMO as articulated by Gounaris (2006).



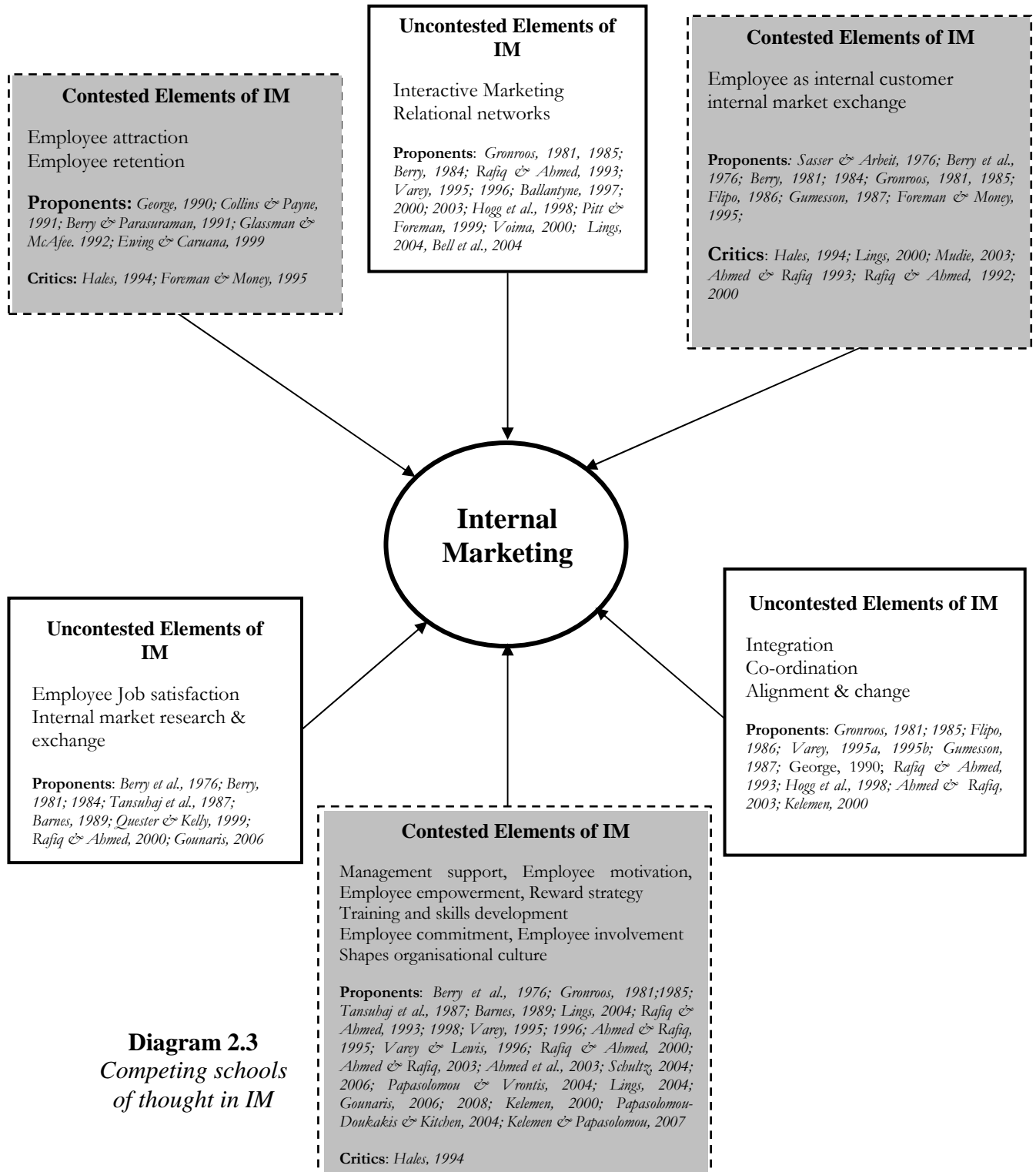
Source: Gounaris (2006, p.436)

**Diagram 2.2:** Behavioural dimensions of internal market orientation and the activities that typify them.



Source: Lings (2004, p.409)

## 2.13 Competing schools of thought in IM



**Diagram 2.3**  
Competing schools  
of thought in IM

### **2.13.1 Discussion of the various IM themes as contained in diagram 2.3**

As I indicated in the background to this thesis and elaborated under the preceding sections of this chapter, IM suffers from a multiplicity of views and competing theoretical alternatives, which has led to confusion and the fragmentation of IM research. In the above diagram, I have attempted to categorise these competing alternatives. This is necessary within the context of providing the frame through which to understand and evaluate better this study's focus. The diagram serves as a means of expressing the key competing themes and perspectives generally linked with the concept of IM. However, aspects in the diagram where disagreements i.e. 'contested elements of IM', exist as to what is IM have been shaded and denoted with broken lines. I will elaborate below the thematic contents comprising each of the categories beginning with the 'uncontested' IM perspectives, i.e. aspects where consensus exists in the literature as to what is IM.

### **2.13.2 IM as interactive marketing and relational networks**

Interactive marketing and relational networks are two inter-related areas where a broad consensus exists amongst academic scholars as to what IM means. From an IM point of view, the notion that IM is the relational approach to market exchange dynamics that occur inside the organisation as well as a mechanism for building successful network of quality relationships between the organisation and the employee is a widespread doctrine. Building relationships between the employee and external customers is important, but crucial is the need for the organisation to build quality relationships with its employee groups. The nature of such a relationship is widely perceived to influence employee-customer interactions. Several IM studies (e.g. example, Gronroos, 1981, 1985; Berry, 1984; Rafiq & Ahmed, 1993; Varey, 1995;

1996; Ballantyne, 1997; 2000; 2003; Hogg et al., 1998; Pitt & Foreman, 1999; Voima, 2000; Lings, 2004, Bell *et al.*, 2004; Gounaris, 2006) recognise that interactive marketing and relational networks are the key dimensions of IM critical to building a quality relationship between the organisation and its employee groups.

Primarily, IM is perceived to co-ordinate the development of relationships and tasks between individuals within the organisation including frontline and back-office/support staff. Since these categories of staff interact and relate with one another at some point in the process of service delivery, there is a consensus that fostering and nurturing the internal relationships between them and the organisation is the building block of IM philosophy (Ahmed & Rafiq, 2003). Thus, as Bell *et al.*, (2004, p.113) recently found, the overarching IM function in this direction includes initiating, maintaining, and developing networks of quality internal relationships between employees, their management, and the organisation for the purpose of creating superior value for customers.

However, unlike in the traditional/external marketing context in which relational networks are defined mainly by economic factors often regulated by competing price mechanisms, the relational networks generated and developed via IM are grounded in some form of knowledge exchange patterns that exist within the organisation. Ballantyne (2003) suggests that these exchange patterns include *hierarchical exchanges* – where knowledge is exchanged and legitimised through formal hierarchical channels i.e. top-bottom, *inter-functional exchanges* – where knowledge is exchanged laterally between employees across functional boundaries, and legitimised by reference to external customers' needs, and *network exchanges* – where

knowledge is generated and disseminated by exchanges within spontaneous, internal communities who are often driven by common socio-economic interests. Their exchanges are legitimised ultimately, through the hierarchical structures in the organisation of which they are also a part. Gronroos (1985) implies that the dynamics of the above exchange patterns resonate with the notion of interactive marketing. Interactive marketing encourages cross-selling in the organisation as well as mutual interactions amongst employees, which is argued to help the organisation both strategically and tactically in achieving its external marketing goals. Thus, the effective management of these mutual interactions, as Ahmed & Rafiq (2003) rightly identify, is widely undisputed amongst academic scholars in IM as the underlying IM principle.

### **2.13.3 Employee job satisfaction and internal market research & exchange**

Employee job satisfaction and internal market research and exchange are other aspects of debate in IM with a relatively strong consensus, especially, amongst conceptual IM studies. As implied above, given the general notion that IM involves the effective management of the internal relationships between internal parties and the organisation, there is a consensus amongst IM scholars that part of such effective relationship management process entails understanding and satisfying employee needs using internal market research and exchange. If employees' needs are understood and satisfied, they are more likely inclined to satisfy ultimately the needs of external customers. Based on this assumption, most conceptual studies in IM (e.g. Berry *et al.*, 1976; Sasser & Arbeit, 1976; Berry, 1981; 1984; Barnes, 1989; Rafiq & Ahmed, 2000) believe that implementing IM programmes within the organisation results in employee job satisfaction.



Although conceptually, a broad consensus exists that IM results in employee job satisfaction, there is however lack of clarity as to how internal market research and exchange is linked with employee job satisfaction. This is because the key empirical studies in IM attempting to link IM with the construct of internal market research and exchange remain vague and unclear. For instance, in their operationalisation of the IM construct, Lings (2004) and Gounaris (2006; 2008) imply that in IM the purpose of internal market research is to gauge competition in the external marketplace. This view not only negates the theoretically perceived role of internal market research and exchanges in IM domain, but also contradicts the conceptual view (See Berry, 1981; Rafiq & Ahmed, 1993; 2000) that employee internal survey is a mechanism through which IM integrates the activities within the organisation.

As Berry (1981) specifically argues, internal market research and exchange is understood as a mechanism through which the organisation can secure a good knowledge and understanding of employees' various needs as well as characteristics in their satisfaction levels. Therefore, what exists is a lack of clear understanding as to the purpose of internal market research and exchange and not necessarily a dispute as to its relevance in IM. In other words, although the relevance of internal market research is not generally disputed *per se* within the wider IM domain field, the lack of empirical clarity in terms of its role has however drawn criticisms from HRM studies (e.g. Hales, 1994) examining IM.

#### **2.13.4 Integration, co-ordination, alignment & change mechanism**

Another inter-related aspect where consensus exists in the literature as to what is IM relates to IM's link with integration, co-ordination, alignment and change mechanism. There is a general perception that IM serves as an 'integrator' and 'co-ordinator' of different organisational interfaces, which consists of individuals, processes, systems and subsystems both within and external to the organisation. Although integration arguably remains one of the most important and yet the most difficult challenge facing organisations, IM is widely recognised to play an important role in this direction by harmonizing the implementation of cross-functional activities. IM is perceived to achieve this by enhancing the organisation's ability to harness its employees' skills and capabilities through its role of mediation i.e. by maximising internal relationships, understanding, and satisfying individual needs through internal surveys. Through its role of mediation, IM ensures there is individual involvement and commitment towards the successful implementation of organisational goals.

In theory, several IM studies (e.g. Gronroos, 1981; 1985; Flipo, 1986; Gumesson, 1987; George, 1990; Ahmed & Rafiq, 1993; Varey, 1995a, 1995b; Ahmed & Rafiq, 2003) support the above claims. They argue that IM integrates and co-ordinates the various functional activities and business processes within the organisation in order to make such activities and the use of such business processes "more market oriented" (Gronroos, 1981, p.237). Ahmed & Rafiq (2003, p.1180) posit that IM's co-ordinating role can be understood within the context of its ability to bring together "all activities – including internal and external relationships, networks, interaction and collaborations by examining all activities involved in satisfying customers throughout the internal supply chain." Thus, IM's role as an effective agent of co-ordination rests

in its ability to bring together the competing organisational activities and processes, including human and non-human elements, e.g. personnel and procedures. It involves looking out for where the business is in functional 'silos' and mobilising the required level of internal support to overcome resistance to change that often arise during the introduction of new organisational programmes.

Related to the above is the understanding that IM involves a planned effort to overcome organisational resistance to change, and aligns employees towards the effective and cross-functional implementation of corporate strategies (Ahmed & Rafiq, 1993). This implies that regardless of where the individual may be in the internal supply chain i.e. HRM or marketing department, IM seeks to align the efforts of such individual with the implementation of cross-functional and corporate strategies. In this sense, as several IM studies (e.g. Gronroos, 1981) identify, IM achieves this by mandating that employees be informed first about new organisational programmes, made to understand and accept such new programmes before they are launched externally. Therefore, there is a consensus that IM helps in the areas highlighted above, i.e., IM helps to integrate and align individual efforts to strategic goals and coherence.

Common to this is the distinguishing characters of IM's alignment and integration mechanism. IM's focus on alignment narrowly ensures that individuals are in agreement with corporate strategies and organisational goals, whilst IM's task of integration and co-ordination is much broader and inclusive. It combines both human and non-human elements e.g. ethos, psychological wellbeing, systems, processes, information and skills, in enhancing cross-functional efficiency and effectiveness.

This entails understanding individual needs vis a vis organisational goals through internal survey, and ensuring that organisational processes are designed from the end-customer's point of view. Although the foregoing offers various lenses through which to appreciate the core of IM phenomenon, there are major areas of disagreement as to what is IM, as shown in the above diagram. These areas are elaborated below.

#### **2.13.5 Employee as internal customer and internal market exchange**

Despite the fact that this study has attempted to clarify in [sections 2.3 and 2.3.1](#) the confusion surrounding the overarching idea of IM as internal market exchange and the notion of 'employees as internal customers', this subject remains highly contested and debated in IM research. The notion of employee as internal customer is cognate with the idea of internal market exchange and highly related to interactive marketing and relational networks. The idea of internal market exchange is underpinned by the logic that the internal business relationship between the employee and the employer is not different from the nature of relationship that exists between organisations and their external customers. This view is somewhat interlinked with the notion of 'employee as internal customer', which is underpinned by the need to recognise employee satisfaction as crucial to external customer satisfaction. Both ideas constitute a central feature of IM phenomenon where considerable differences in opinion still exist.

However, some IM studies (e.g. [Berry, 1981; 1984; Day & Wensley, 1983; Quester & Kelly, 1999](#)) have attempted to clarify the above-mentioned ideas. They argue that the notion of employee as internal customer is largely predicated upon the belief that by satisfying the needs of employees and other stakeholders e.g. suppliers, distributors as internal customers, the organisation is more likely to satisfy the needs of its external

customers. Whilst most IM scholars generally accept the above underlying logic in principle, some schools of thought in IM (e.g. Rafiq & Ahmed, 1992; Mudie, 2003) have called for caution in terms of how the notion of employee as internal customer is used and interpreted. Not least because apart from the apparent obligations inherent in contractual employment relationships, viewing or defining IM from such a standpoint, as Mudie (2003) particularly argues, will hinge on its conceptual strengths, aims and perceived legitimacy. This notion nonetheless, has attracted stronger criticisms from HRM studies examining the concept of IM. They argue that the employee as internal customer notion is an “exploitation of the customers’ relationship with the organisation” (Hales, 1994, p.52). In other words, such a notion is challenged and disputed by HRM studies examining IM as well as some schools of thought in IM domain field.

Generally, major disagreements mainly relate to the definitional limits of the use of the notion of employee as internal customer. In fairness, though, some IM scholars (e.g. Berry, 1984; Gumesson, 1987; Rafiq & Ahmed, 2000) have attempted to consider the limits of the idea of employee’s life as an internal customer in relation to the ‘traditional’ customer notion. They argue that in its broad sense, the notion of employee as internal customer carries a more restrictive definition of employee’s life, as it focuses on the need to recognise that employee performance is crucial to the successful performance of the organisation. However, despite the general disagreements relating to its definitional limits, the notion of employee as internal customer is deemed as a basic element of IM.

### **2.13.6 Employee attraction and retention**

Another area where there are considerable differences in opinion as to what is IM relates to the view that IM can be used as a way of attracting and retaining the best possible skills in the organisation. This is premised on the notion that the way human resources are managed in the organisation can be approached from a marketing perspective in which IM is perceived to play a crucially co-ordinating role. Proponents (e.g. [Berry, 1984](#); [George, 1990](#); [Collins & Payne, 1991](#); [Berry & Parasuraman, 1991](#); [Glassman & McAfee, 1992](#)) of this school of thought offer a rationale for why IM is a necessary approach to the management of human resources. They claim that IM integrates and co-ordinates all organisational activities including the marketing and HRM functions to the extent that HRM becomes a resource tool for marketing in order to ensure efficiency and effectiveness in the task of managing employee relationships. Although the above sentiments have yet to gain traction in the domain field of IM, it remains an open-ended debate amongst IM scholars.

Nevertheless, the idea that HRM could serve as a resource tool for marketing in the management of employee relationships has attracted pointed remarks from HRM studies examining IM's association with HRM. [Hales \(1994\)](#) is particularly highly critical. He argues that such a view, yet again, echoes his stance that IM is exploitative. From an HRM perspective, as Hales contends, such IM perception short of usurping HRM traditional functions is primarily perceived as exploiting the symbolic character attached to employment relationships by giving a marketing 'slant' to specific personnel functions. In Hales's view, the jobs, conditions of employment and work environment offered by the organisation, together with its goals and

activities, all become ‘products’ which need to be marketed to employees as ‘customers’.

From an IM perspective however, it has been argued that organisations can only retain their best skills, i.e. employees, by improving their jobs as internal products as well as the conditions under which they carry out their jobs. From these assumptions, **Collins & Payne (1991)** particularly observe that organisations can only retain and improve their employee skills through the effective utilisation of various IM programmes, such as, motivation, empowerment and strong management-supervisory support for employees’ career advancement. The above-mentioned IM programmes particularly relate to the following aspects of IM phenomenon where intense disagreements exist between IM proponents and HRM scholars examining the concept of IM.

#### **2.13.7 Employee empowerment, reward, employee training and motivation**

Several key studies in IM (e.g. **Tansuhaj *et al.*, 1987; Ahmed, *et al.*, 2003; Bell, *et al.*, 2004; Lings, 2004; Papasolomou & Vrontis, 2006; Gounaris, 2006; 2008**) have found empirical evidence to suggest that IM is linked to an array of organisational constructs, such as, employee empowerment, reward, employee training & skills development as well as top management-organisational support. Crucially, they found that the above-mentioned constructs are IM features that have different degrees of influence on employee involvement, their motivation as well as level of commitment to the organisation.

For instance, in a study examining IM initiatives in thirty-five business units from seven UK retail banks, **Papasolomou & Vrontis (2006)** found that employees of

different strata believe that being rewarded and recognised for exceptional service delivery was a key performance motivator. In operationalising a relational model of IM, Bell *et al.*, (2004) found a significantly positive relationship between management-supervisory support and employee job motivation. In a separate study examining the effects of IM initiatives in banks in Thailand, Tansuhaj *et al.*, (1987) observed that IM results in increased levels of employee job satisfaction as well as their commitment to the organisation. Ahmed *et al.*, 2003) and Gounaris (2006; 2008) have employed the constructs of reward and empowerment in their recent operationalisation of the IM concept respectively. Empirically, the findings from the above-mentioned studies lend support to the general understanding that all the above constructs including empowerment, reward, training, top-management support and motivation are key strategic dimensions of IM that have implications for employee cum organisational performance.

More specifically, for example, there is a general perception amongst IM scholars that employee empowerment via IM enables employees to recover quickly critical marketing situations. Thus, allowing them to save time that can be beneficial to both the external customer and the organisation, as well as provide feedback to the management about customer reactions in a manner otherwise would not have been possible through constant recourse to managerial influence. Although the findings emerging from the above-mentioned studies have had a strong influence in sustaining the consensus amongst the majority of IM scholars, such findings have however, failed to gain the support of studies (e.g. Hales, 1994) in IM from an HRM perspective. On the one hand, IM studies generally highlight that training is a key feature of IM, and that IM works through employee involvement, empowerment and



reward to improve employee motivation and commitment. In contrast, studies in IM from an HRM perspective contest the veracity of IM's role in employee empowerment, commitment and motivation. For example, in taking to task some of the above empirical claims, Hales (1994) concludes that there is nothing particularly 'empowering' for employees in giving feedback information on organisational practices or consumer reactions. At issue is whether employees' 'wishes', or simply their 'knowledge' is being taken into account in such involvement practices.

In summary, the scope of this section does not permit a comprehensive rehearsal of the above IM views and counterviews. From the foregoing, nonetheless, the position that emerges is that the current understanding of the IM phenomenon is riddled with a diversity of meanings and a multiplicity of understanding. Extant studies in IM generally show lack of clarity in specifying those activities that constitute the IM concept and those that do not. Moreover, in the main the above-mentioned studies have certainly succeeded in serving some theoretical and/or ideological agenda, they are far removed from the reality of the experiences of practitioners attempting to implement IM in their organisations. Based on this understanding, Ahmed & Rafiq (2003) and Schultz (2004; 2006) suggest that future research in IM domain field must be 'holistic'. This implies that a study investigating IM phenomenon cannot be grasped without linking it with the experiences of those who give meaning to it – i.e. *practitioners*. The failure to link IM research with practitioners' viewpoints characterise the major problem facing the domain field of this study.

Thus, it is against such a backdrop that my study, in line with a number of management studies (e.g. Sanders, 1982; Kupers 1998; Gibson & Hanes, 2003; Ehrich, 2003) which have urged organisational and management researchers to consider the phenomenological analysis as a way of investigating organisational and management concepts, becomes relevant. A commonality amongst this group of studies, as Kupers (1998, p.338) observes, is a consensus that individuals involved in organisational actions and management activities “are first and foremost embodied beings who are embedded in a specific “life world.” The concept of the ‘life world’, as detailed in Appendix One, is a phenomenological term closely associated with phenomenology, by which meanings of a phenomenon are constituted and derived from human interaction in everyday world.

The promise of providing an appropriate framework for a holistic understanding of the constitution of individual activities as well as how individuals assign meanings to management activities in organisational settings means that a phenomenological research approach lends itself as a way of providing a much better understanding of the structure of IM. I consider the value of phenomenology to the domain field of study in subsequent chapters. First, however, I present a more formal statement of the phenomenological research questions and aims guiding this study.

## **2.14 Research aims and questions**

The current study is guided by three major aims/problems:

1. The first aim is to capture in as much detail as possible, through phenomenological analysis, the constituent structure of IM from the everyday expressions of practitioners who have experienced IM. The research question guiding this aspect is: “Can you

describe in as much detail as possible a situation in which internal marketing has occurred for you.” Through the phenomenological analysis of the participants’ (ordinary) expressions, the aim is to describe the structural elements that constitute IM as perceived and experienced by practitioners. In terms of the research objectives outlined in chapter one of this study, this aspect seeks to ascertain whether marketing-like actions can be directed internally as well as the likely outcomes of doing so. The aim is to build upon the existing theoretical interventions on IM, particularly, those with a definitional and empirical emphasis. There are no specific hypotheses expected to emerge from this questioning as a result of its descriptive nature.

2. The second aim is to clarify through descriptive phenomenological analysis, an appropriate structure and actions that constitute IM in the light of (emerging findings) understanding its experiential aspects. The research question guiding this aspect is; “what part of that (from the participants’ actual expressions) experience would you consider internal marketing”? This question serves to clarify further and to ascertain the veracity of what participants express in the preceding phenomenological question. Again, no specific hypotheses are appropriate.

3. The third aim is then to understand fully how such constituent structures sit with other IM research findings as an on-going academic research activity and management practice. The research question guiding this aspect is; “Are you then saying internal marketing is what?” It is not expected that participants’ expressions at this stage would significantly deviate and/or differ from their initial expressions. However, outstanding themes at this stage in the interview protocol would be recorded and emphasized. This is with a view to extracting their theoretical and practical relevance

as well as implications to understanding the emerging meaning and structure of IM. Therefore, such outstanding themes will form part of the elements that culminate into a final descriptive report of what constitutes the IM structure. This aspect of my research question would enhance my attempt to highlight areas of divergence and convergence between the current phenomenological findings and the findings of other IM studies with more conventional research approaches. Again, as in the previous phenomenological research questions, no specific hypotheses will emerge.

## **2.15 Summary**

This chapter has attempted to provide a clarification of the often-misunderstood theoretical concepts associated with the IM concept as well as highlight the flaws inherent in how IM has been defined over the years. Key empirical studies operationalising the IM construct were also brought under scrutiny. My critical examination showed that the claims and the outcomes from such empirical studies are inconclusive in presenting an acceptable IM structure. The critical examination of the IM literature culminated in a diagrammatic classification of the competing schools of thought in IM as well as a discussion of the key IM themes as contained in the diagram. Finally, the chapter concluded with research questions for this study as a whole as well as the likely nature of the phenomenological interview questions guiding such research questions. The relevance of phenomenology as a method of articulating the meaning and the structure of IM will be considered next

## **Chapter 3**

### **The methodological philosophy of this study**

No matter how refined the measurement or how ingenious the experimental techniques employed, all its efforts are meaningless without a clear grasp of what it is that is being measured and correlated in the first place.

- R. J. McCall (1983)

#### **3.0 Overview**

This chapter has two primary aims. Firstly, it details the theoretical background to the methodological frame through which the outcomes of this study can be better understood. The research strategy of qualitative descriptive phenomenology is of relevance to addressing this study's research aims. Therefore, its basic principles will inform the overall attitude of this study. This will be presented in form of a review of the phenomenology literature explicating my understanding of the theory and the philosophy of phenomenology as a research method. This is necessary given the confusion that surrounds the field of phenomenology and its non-mainstream status as a research method in this field of study.

Secondly, a discussion of all aspects of the debate concerning qualitative research in general is beyond the scope of this chapter. However, a detailed critique of qualitative research from the perspective of the 'reliability' and 'validity' issues confronting its research tradition will be presented. Such a critique is necessary within the context of establishing the ecological validity of this study.

### 3.1 Origins and the philosophy of phenomenology

Phenomenology can be defined as a way of making clear the basic features of a concept or phenomenon, and seeking ways to understand what these features mean. This entails going back to the foundations and roots of the phenomenon, i.e. as Cohen (1987, p.31) identifies, beginning with the phenomenon and “not theories.” Achieving this requires reaching out to the world of everyday experiences of individuals with whom the investigated phenomenon is self-evident in their natural contexts, not in contrived situations.

A review of the phenomenology literature (e.g. Polkinghorne, 1989) as a branch of science and philosophy indicates that it initially set itself the radical task of returning to ‘*the things themselves*’. That is, it aims to develop a rigorous and unbiased study of subjective experience by exposing how my consciousness imposes itself upon reality. Phenomenology aims to reveal things, ‘*as they appear*’, independent of and prior to any reflective interpretation, scientific or otherwise. Phenomenology also aims to clarify the role of phenomena of consciousness in the process of meaning-construction. Although, phenomenology deals with subjective experience as part of its primary concern, Giorgi (1985a) however, observes that its key interest is not subjectivity per se, but with complementing existing scientific paradigms and clarifying or removing other paradigms’ unnecessary prejudgements, assumptions and biases.

Phenomenology, as Edmund Husserl wrote:

did not at all disparage the experimental work done by eminent men. Rather it laid bare certain, in the literal sense, radical defects of method upon which the removal of which, in my opinion, must depend an elevation...to a higher scientific level and an extraordinary amplification of its field of work (Husserl, 1913/1931, p. xviii).

A number of philosophical terms within phenomenology as a qualitative research method overlap, and somewhat imply each other. These philosophical terms include ‘description’, ‘essences’, ‘phenomenological reduction’, and ‘intentionality’. Thus, correct understanding of phenomenology as a research method minimally requires an explanation of at least some of these terms.

In brief, Giorgi (1985a) remarks that ‘description’ is the use of language to offer linguistic expression or communicate to others, i.e. the community of researchers, the characteristics of a phenomenon to which one are presented with as precisely as they are presented. The aim of the description in this case entails the use of my disciplinary language to articulate the invariant features of IM in the way that practitioners have brought and/or presented their experience to my awareness, and by such articulation invoke the frame by which the IM phenomenon has come to make sense. This requires imaginative effort on my part in appreciating the emergent meanings and IM understandings, as experienced, and report the IM phenomenon as it appears within the constraints of such presentational evidence. This process, as Giorgi (1985a) notes, requires adopting a descriptive attitude, which implies describing what presents itself precisely as it presents itself.

Description also implies the adoption of the attitude of the phenomenological reduction, which entails the suspension of past knowledge about the phenomenon under investigation as well as withholding any existential affirmation (Giorgi, 1992).

This applies to the possibilities that open up through the phenomenological reduction i.e. the researcher concentrates his or her attention on immediate and concrete phenomenon and focuses on describing the phenomenon from within the perspective of the phenomenological reduction instead of interpreting or making speculations about the phenomenon. ‘Phenomenological reduction’ refers to the attempt to ‘*bracket*’, i.e. suspend or put aside one’s own prejudgments and assumptions about a phenomenon. Thus, by suspending one’s assumptions, as Polkinghorne (1989) remarks, one is laying the ground to approach a phenomenon with an openness to perceive the phenomenon as it presents itself.

‘Essence’ is the constant identity, features, and the characteristics that hold together a given phenomenon. That is, the core meaning of an individual’s impression of a given phenomenon, which makes it what it is. In other words, the various constant meanings the individuals employed for this study attribute to their experience of IM constitute the essence of IM phenomenon as experienced and presented by such individuals.

‘Intentionality’ refers to the fact that consciousness is always of or about something, it is always directed towards an ‘object’ that is not itself consciousness. Consciousness as Giorgi (1997, p.5) remarks, “refers to the awareness of the system, “embodied-self-world-others”, all of which, and aspects and parts of which are intuitable, i.e., presentable, and precisely as they are presented.” Intentionality is derived from a more general notion of the relationship between individuals and the (world) phenomena. However, according to Giorgi (1997), the overlapping nature of the above terms is evident when understood within the context that through the process of phenomenological reduction and description, the phenomenological analysis seeks to



provide a given account of the essence, i.e. meaning of a phenomenon under investigation, and describes or articulates its fundamental meaning in a manner that is universal.

Phenomenology as a term encompasses both a philosophical movement and a qualitative research approach. It emerged in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century Germany to challenge the dominant positivist scientific assumptions on the origin and nature of truth (Spiegelberg, 1982; 1994; Ehrich, 2003). Phenomenology is taken from the Greek word “*phainomenon*”, - meaning the ‘appearance of things or phenomena’ (Spinelli, 1989, p.2). The word ‘phenomena’, also phenomenon, as Moustakas (1994) identifies, comes from the Greek word “*phaenesthai*” – meaning ‘to flare up’, to show/reveal itself, to appear. According to Ehrich (2003), phenomena refer to anything that presents itself to us, such as emotions, thoughts, concepts and physical objects. Polkinghorne (1989, p.41) argues that phenomenology is not an antithesis of the analytical mainstream natural sciences, neither is it anti-science. It goes beyond the analytical processes of a phenomenon to reveal its ‘essences’ by refocusing inquiry “not on descriptions of worldly objects but on descriptions of experience”, which constitutes and relates to a phenomenon.

Implicit is the view that because the descriptions of a phenomenon are derived from experience, experience itself must be clearly understood before a strong foundation can be established for studying the phenomenon (Polkinghorne, 1989). Phenomenon within phenomenology means that whatever is given or presented is understood as it relates to the consciousness of the individual who had the experience (Giorgi, 1997). This explains why, in the context of this study, I had to withhold any existential

affirmation or lay claim to the existence of IM phenomenon before my personal engagement, i.e. data collection, with the individuals employed for this study. Thus, the philosophy of phenomenology requires the suspension of any *a priori* knowledge in order to “attend, instead, to what is present or given in awareness” (Polkinghorne, 1989, p.41).

Suspending any known knowledge of the object of investigation helps to remove the often-prejudged distractions of human introspection in order to concentrate on “the need to look outside...for sources that “cause” experience” (Polkinghorne, 1989, p.42). This implies that phenomenology is concerned with the experiential reality of ‘meaning’ of a phenomenon as well as its concrete particulars, which make the phenomenon remain constant regardless of various ways in which its manifestations<sup>6</sup> present themselves. Thus, the philosophy of phenomenology focuses inquiry on descriptions of the essential structures inherent in a phenomenon in a way that it is possible to have a general knowledge of the phenomenon. In this sense, as Polkinghorne (1989, p.43) notes, phenomenology is “concerned with the universal elements and relationships that constitute experience in general.” These experiences relate and are drawn from the socio-psychological perspectives of the people involved (Welman & Kruger 1999).

As a philosophical movement, Edmund Husserl provides the intellectual motivation for viewing phenomenology as a radically new source of seeking an understanding of

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<sup>6</sup> I consider it necessary to provide an illustration with an example taken from Polkinghorne (1989, p. 42). Thus, for a figure to be experienced as either a square or a triangle, the essential elements must be either four or three intersecting straight lines regardless of whether it is drawn on a blackboard, or painted on a human face. Other elements, such as particular colour or size, or the particular size of the angles are unessential “instead, they serve to differentiate particular experiences... [of these figures] from one another”.

knowledge. Valle *et al.*, (1989) identify that Husserl's (1970) views are rooted in transcendental phenomenology - the rigorous study of 'things as they appear' in order to arrive at their essential understanding. The major focus of Husserl's attention was neither on the world as interpreted nor created by scientific fact and theory. Rather, his concern was with 'the world of everyday experience as understood and expressed in everyday language by the actors'. Thus, Husserl (1970) propagated the view that human consciousness was always and essentially oriented toward a world of emergent meaning.

Other prominent writers, such as, Alfred Schuz (1962) and Max Scheler (1961) are known to have also made unique contributions to the philosophy of phenomenology. Whereas Husserl concentrates on how I construct my rational sense of reality in general, Schuz (1962), for example, focuses on the construction of social reality. Schuz is credited particularly with bringing Husserl's phenomenology to the realm of sociology and social psychology. Schuz uses what he refers to as 'typifications' of consciousness – i.e. means by which people comprehend the nature of social reality in order to articulate the commonsense structures of 'consciousness' in everyday life. According to Polkinghorne (1989), Schuz's work is primarily important within phenomenology as it opens up such social issues as 'phenomena of encounter', 'social interaction', and the 'reflective articulation of intersubjectivity'.

Scheler (1961), on the other hand, focuses on the description and analysis of non-rational essences of values, feelings, social sentiments and love. Scheler made vital contributions to the phenomenology of religion by describing the essential interhuman phenomena of love and hate, the variety and forms of sympathy and the phenomenon

of resentment. Scheler provides the exemplary contributions in the area of sociology of knowledge by distinguishing between three types of knowledge – knowledge of ‘control’, as in the aspirations of science and technology; knowledge of ‘essences’, as in the aspirations of philosophy, metaphysics and phenomenology; and knowledge of ‘salvation’, as in the religious quest for spiritual fulfilment. In summary, different writers represent different phases, e.g. existential and hermeneutic, in the phenomenological movements.

However, for this study’s purpose, focus is on the phenomenological movement of Husserl. Husserl’s philosophical views on phenomenology are consolidated through his concept of “*Lebenswelt*” or the “life world”. The concept of the ‘life world’, as detailed in [Appendix One](#), was Husserl’s attempt to illuminate the general philosophical frame from which descriptive phenomenology emerges, i.e. to reconcile his variant of phenomenology with the existential. [Husserl \(1931\)](#) held that knowledge of the structures of a phenomenon was not a matter of induction or generalization from a sample, but gained from apprehending the inner principles and necessities of the structure. Gaining an understanding of the inner principles of the structure of a phenomenon requires carefully working through and testing the various descriptions of the phenomenon, “until the essential elements and their relationships are differentiated from the unessential and particular” ([Polkinghorne, 1989, p. 42](#)).

Thus, as [Husserl \(1962\)](#) notes, the methodological process of differentiating the unessential elements from particular elements begins with “*epoche*” or ‘bracketing’, then progresses towards the ‘phenomenological reduction’, and culminates into its component of ‘free imaginative variation’. This means that ‘bracketing’,

‘phenomenological reduction’ and ‘free imaginative variation’ encompass the three major interlocking analytical steps that underpin phenomenology as a qualitative research method.

### 3.2 Towards phenomenology as a qualitative research method

A multi-disciplinary number of qualitative studies (e.g. Sanders, 1982; Giorgi, 1985b; Polkinghorne, 1989; van Manen, 1990; von Eckartsberg, 1998a; Ehrich, 2003; Gibson & Hanes, 2003; Kupers, 1998; 2002; 2005; Berglund, 2007) recognise phenomenology as a research method. These studies employ their own strategies or idiosyncratic procedures for applying the phenomenological research method. This implies there are can be variations in the application of the phenomenological research method. However, it is unclear as to whether or not different variants of phenomenology follow the phenomenological criteria as a sound qualitative research method. Several studies (e.g. Giorgi, 2006, p.305) stressing the need to “sharpen the level of on ongoing practices in the area of phenomenological inspired qualitative research” clarify this point.

The variations in phenomenological research method not only create tensions within the research strategy of phenomenology, especially between descriptive and interpretive perspectives, it also lead to confusion as to how best to approach phenomenological study within the discipline of qualitative research. Nevertheless, most phenomenological based qualitative research generally adopts the process of ‘*epoche*’ or ‘bracketing’, ‘phenomenological reduction’<sup>7</sup> and ‘free imaginative

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<sup>7</sup> For clarity in explaining the concept of phenomenological reduction, I consider it necessary to illustrate with this mundane example taken from Giorgi (1985a). When I eat black grapes, the physical object is effectively destroyed, and yet, the grape remains a matter of experience to me. Its various properties – that is, its juiciness, its roundness, its differing colours (e.g. redness, greenness or blackness), and its other

variation’<sup>8</sup> as fundamental criteria in their attempt to describe or interpret a phenomenon under investigation. Each of the above-mentioned criteria underpins the phenomenological research process of this study, and they are further explained below.

### 3.2.1 ‘*Epoche*’ or Bracketing

Polkinghorne (1989) identifies that the ‘*epoche*’ or ‘bracketing’ is the first inclination towards attempting to understand phenomena as they really are i.e. in returning to ‘*the things themselves*’, without any prejudgements or preoccupations. ‘*Epoche*’ originally comes from the Greek word, meaning ‘to refrain from judgment’ or keep away from the everyday way of perceiving things (Moustakas, 1994). In other words, ‘bracketing’ was my negative move towards suspending any prior knowledge or assumptions that I had held about the IM phenomenon so that it can be fully focused upon and clearly understood from the perspectives of the practitioners. It was my first step towards adopting an attitude of the phenomenological reduction. For this process to occur, Husserl (1970) suggests that one’s assumptions/subjective perspectives or natural attitude be suspended in order to get to the essence of the phenomenon.

Although it can be difficult to completely suspend one’s assumptions and biases about a phenomenon, or ‘bracket completely the natural attitude’, Ehrich (2003) notes,

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properties may remain as a matter of contemplation for me – i.e. as what Husserl (1962) idealistically describe as ‘*noema*’, which constitutes the concept of ‘intentionality’ (explained under section 3.1). *Noema* is a Greek word – which simply means the perceived ‘meaning’ of something, often in recollection (Moustakas, 1994).

<sup>8</sup> Applying the process of free imaginative variation to the above example of grapes would mean that I would begin by modifying the various aspects of the grape in my imagination, so as to make various imaginary grapes begin to exist. Although some would be black, like the one that I had eaten, others might be red or green. That I do not find a green or a red grape in the actual encounter of my having eaten the black grapes (as in the illustration provided) is irrelevant at this stage, what is important is to discover the essential structure and the essential features (e.g. juiciness) of grape.

however, that by being acutely aware of such a technique and its implications for understanding the phenomenon under investigation, it can be possible to control one's subjective biases or perspectives. According to [Racher & Robinson \(2003\)](#), in order to suspend my subjective perspectives and hold my theoretical assumptions in abeyance, Husserl devised the phenomenological reduction in order to facilitate the essence of a phenomenon to emerge. However, it is through achieving bracketing that ultimately other substantive process in the phenomenological reduction essentially follows. Thus, bracketing, as [Moustakas \(1994\)](#) remarks, provides one with an original vantage point, a clearing of the mind either to suspend whatever blurs the phenomenon from one's theoretical knowledge or to reach premature conclusions regarding the object of investigation.

In [Giorgi's \(1981\)](#) view, to proceed in phenomenological study without bracketing leaves one open to all sorts of 'fallacy', as there is the possibility that one's judgement about a phenomenon will be biased by numerous preconceptions, wishes, desires, and motives. [von Eckartsberg \(1998a, p.6\)](#) points out "it was just this bias of one's uncritical "natural attitude" that Husserl wished to free himself from, in order to view a given topic from a position as free of presuppositions as possible." According to him, it is only after bracketing one's preconceptions "was the natural attitude said to give way to a more disciplined "phenomenological attitude" from which one could grasp essential structures as they themselves appear" ([von Eckartsberg, 1998a, p.6](#)). Thus, Husserlian philosophy views 'bracketing' as the phenomenological process through which one adopts the phenomenological reduction with a view to grasping the essential structures of a phenomenon as they are presented to one's awareness.

In other words, by implication, ‘bracketing’ and the ‘phenomenological reduction’ should not be confused as two separate steps whereby one step – ‘bracketing’ is done first in an effort to prepare or encounter the second step – the ‘phenomenological reduction’. Rather, bracketing and phenomenological reduction occur together as two internal basic moments within the ‘reduction’ process that is peculiar to phenomenological research.

### **3.2.2 Phenomenological reduction**

Husserl (1962) devised the phenomenological reduction as a methodological technique by which phenomenological research findings are made more precise. Phenomenological reduction requires that, “the phenomenologist puts his or her existential belief “out of action”, that is, dispenses with the belief that objects exists in and out of themselves, apart from a consciousness that perceives them” (von Eckartsberg, 1998a, p. 6). When one’s assumptions are suspended, it is perceived that what remains is the ‘pure appearance’ of the phenomenon under investigation. Thus, Husserl claims that the process of phenomenological reduction does not lead to a loss in characteristics of the object or phenomenon presented to one’s awareness. But, as Giorgi (1997, p.7) clarifies, “everything that was present in the natural attitude is retained within the phenomenological reduction, except that one refrains from saying that the phenomenon is as it presents itself; one only says that the phenomenon presents itself as such and such.”

Therefore, the phenomenological reduction demands that one “puts aside” or renders “non-influential” all past knowledge that may be linked or associated with the presently given phenomenon so that it has a chance to present itself in its fullness



(Giorgi, 1997, p. 7). In other words, an attempt is made to first understand the essential features of a phenomenon as free as possible from any prior assumptions and prejudgements or impose explanations before the phenomenon is clearly understood as it is. Thus, Caelli (2000) suggests that Husserlian phenomenological philosophy demands that descriptions of (experience) a phenomenon be gleaned before it can be reflected upon.

The phenomenological reduction simply calls for a suspension of judgement as to the existence or non-existence of a phenomenon or content of such phenomenon. That is, it is an attempt to place the common sense and any known theoretical supposition and knowledge about the phenomenon under investigation into ‘parentheses’ in order to arrive at an unbiased description of the meaning of the phenomenon. This implies, as Kvale 1996 (p.54) identifies, that “phenomenological reduction does not involve an absolute absence of presuppositions, but rather a critical analysis of one’s own presuppositions.” This means, in this case, that phenomenological reduction is not a denial or acceptance/affirmation of the existence of IM phenomenon. Rather, it is a legitimate method that I have to adopt in order to become aware of the emergent meanings of IM in the way that participants present it to me. The idea, according to von Eckartsberg (1998a, p.6), is that “I do not describe something in terms of what I already know or presume to know about it, but rather that I describe that which presents itself to my awareness exactly as it presents itself.”

The phenomenological reduction underpins the intellectual dictum of the Husserlian phenomenological philosophy, i.e. ‘*back to the things themselves!*’ Valle *et al.*, (1989, p.11) notes that the use of the term ‘reduction’ literally means that the person “reduces

the *phenomenon* as it is considered in the natural attitude to a...purely phenomenal realm.” The phenomenological reduction is of significance to phenomenological research method, since, it is believed that by uncovering my preconceptions and interrogating them, I improve my understanding of the phenomenon under investigation (von Eckartsberg, 1998a). Essentially, phenomenological reduction is “the process of coming to know the phenomenon [in this case, IM] as described by the participants” (Parse, 2001, p.79).

Husserl (1962) reinforces the process of phenomenological reduction by augmenting it with a process known as ‘free imaginative variation’. With free imaginative variation, the phenomenon was to be transformed, i.e. varied in imagination by altering all its constituents in order to verify the limits within which the phenomenon has retained its essence. In other words, entering into the attitude of the phenomenological reduction entails - (1) suspending past knowledge about the phenomenon under investigation in order to encounter it first hand and describe it as precisely as it has been rendered or experienced by participants, and (2) to withhold the existential index, as Giorgi (1997) puts it, which means to consider what is given as it is presented in awareness.

In the above sense, the key result of phenomenological reduction is not the concrete, ordinary everyday expressions brought to the researcher’s awareness by participants, although methodologically, it is an important step – but rather, to present to the community of scholars a research finding that is robust and more durable within the context of the scientific discipline utilised (Giorgi, 1997). In order to achieve this, Husserl (1962) suggests that one seeks the meaning, i.e. essence of the phenomenon under investigation by a method of ‘free imaginative variation’.

### 3.2.3 Free imaginative variation

Free imaginative variation is a mental experimentation in which the researcher intentionally alters various aspects of a phenomenon by either taking from or adding to the transformation (Polkinghorne, 1989). Free imaginative variation is “used to investigate essences to determine what is secondary and what is unchangeable or essential” to a phenomenon (Ehrich, 2003, p.50). An essence is the most invariant meaning of a phenomenon, i.e. the articulation of a fundamental meaning of a phenomenon without which the phenomenon could not be what it is presented to be (Giorgi, 1997). The purpose of free imaginative variation is to attain saturation through the transformation of participants’ naïve or ordinary descriptions i.e. to “imaginatively stretch the proposed transformation to the edges until it no longer describes the experience underlying the subject’s naïve description” (Polkinghorne, 1989, p.55). van Manen (1990, p.107) describes the process of free imaginative variation as an attempt to “discover aspects of or qualities that make a phenomenon what it is and without which the phenomenon could not be what it is.”

Central to free imaginative variation, as Moustakas (1994) suggests, is seeking possible meanings by freely utilizing the imagination, varying themes and the frames of reference, employing reversals and polarities, and approaching the phenomenon from divergent perspectives, different positions, roles, or functions. As the name implies, free imaginative variation seeks to verify whether the theme(s) belongs to a phenomenon essentially, rather than incidentally. The aim is to arrive at structural descriptions of the phenomenon, the underlying precipitating factors that define the phenomenon under investigation by targeting ‘meanings’ as a way of integrating structures into essences. Thus, free imaginative variation asks the question: “is this

phenomenon still the same if I imaginatively change or delete theme from the phenomenon?” (van Manen, 1990, p.107). The purpose is to carry out adequate transformation, i.e. attain saturation of data and to make it publicly verifiable so that readers or other researchers will agree that the transformed expressions do describe a process that is contained in the original expression (Polkinghorne, 1989).

Thus, free imaginative variation is the process of ensuring that a recurrent/constant identity that hold together and limits the variations that a phenomenon can undergo has been achieved. This, ultimately, depends upon my ability to awaken possibilities so that whatever is presented factually to me becomes one example of a possible instance of the IM phenomenon. By awakening possibilities I could become aware of those features that cannot be removed and thus, arrive at what constitutes the meaning and/or key dimensions of IM phenomenon. Simply, free imaginative variation would enable me to derive structural themes from textual descriptions that have been obtained through phenomenological reduction. In other words, when I felt that I had a description of the essential features of IM, I should then ask myself – what can I change or leave out without losing the essence of IM phenomenon that has been brought to my awareness.

### **3.3 The process of phenomenological research method**

Applied to qualitative research, phenomenology generally addresses, identifies, describes and interprets the experiences people have regarding a particular phenomenon precisely as those people have had the experiences and understood them (Crotty, 1996). Phenomenology as a qualitative research method involves studying a small number of participants through extensive and prolonged engagement in order to

develop patterns and relationships of meaning ascribed to the phenomenon under investigation. Moustakas (1994) identifies that the empirical phenomenological research approach involves a return to experience in order to obtain comprehensive descriptions of 'lived experiences' that provide the basis for a reflective structural analysis of what portrays the essences of the lived experience. According to Van Kaam (1966, p.15), phenomenology as a qualitative research method essentially "seeks to disclose and elucidate the phenomena of behaviour as they manifest themselves in their perceived immediacy."

However, Giorgi (1985a) identifies that in order to ensure that the philosophical method of conducting phenomenological research conforms more readily to mainstream scientific qualitative practices, certain modifications needed to be introduced such that the features of the phenomenological project were not severed or fragmented. He posits that such modifications were necessary in order to avoid the possible objection of biases, errors and prejudices that I carry with us in my everyday life. Firstly, in his view, data were to be obtained from others' perspectives, and secondly, the researcher was to suspend any previous theoretical knowledge of the phenomenon under investigation. Thirdly, to allow for each discipline to determine and describe what was unique about the investigated phenomenon with its own language and context. In other words, one will imagine that the final description of the expressions of participants in this study regarding IM will be contextualised and/or described using the language common to marketing and/or management research.

Giorgi (1985a) further outlines two separate levels at which a descriptive phenomenological study can be undertaken from an empirical perspective. At one level is the original data – comprising of ordinary descriptions, which can be obtained through open-ended questions and interpersonal engagement with study participants. At another level – the qualitative researcher can describe the structures of the phenomenon based on reflective analysis of the participants’ account of the phenomenon under investigation. Thus, the phenomenological method generally goes from the concrete expressions of a phenomenon by participants to the transformation and description of the structures of the phenomenon. Such a process negates abstracting theories and explanations about the phenomenon without understanding its description as it appears in consciousness of the researcher.

von Eckartsberg (1998a) summarises the general method of undertaking empirical phenomenological research:

I go first from unarticulated living (experienced) to a protocol or account. I create a “life-text” that renders the experience in narrative language, as story. This process generates my data. Second, I move from protocol to explication. Finally, I engage in the process of communication of findings (von Eckartsberg, 1998a, p. 21).

The above procedures are intended to provide the researcher with the framework to focus on grasping the whole meaning of the phenomenon under investigation instead of dividing the phenomenon into parts without understanding the basic structures that give meaning to it. If one divides an investigated phenomenon into parts and ignores, for instance, how the people who experience such a phenomenon articulate it, one runs the risk of producing abstract concepts that may not be meaningful to the people

who experience the phenomenon. In other words, as in this context, it would be difficult to grasp a sense of the whole structure and meaning of IM by separating its parts from the general context in which the practitioners have experienced and understood it. If one were to do so, one would end up with abstract explanations of what constitutes the structure of IM, since one would be approaching the IM phenomenon from one's own theoretical perspectives and biases, divorced from the perspectives and viewpoints of the people, i.e. the practitioners, who experience it in their everyday organisational lives.

Therefore, as Sokolowski (2000) makes clear, in order to avoid the risk of producing abstract concepts from a phenomenon, one must be able to avoid the danger in attributing an abstract meaning to a concrete phenomenon. Doing such would result in concepts and categories that do not really reflect or exist in the consciousness of the people who can relate to such a phenomenon. In other words, as McCall (1983, p.57) cautions, “no matter how refined the measurement or how ingenious the experimental techniques employed...all its efforts are meaningless without a clear grasp of *what it is that is being measured and correlated* in the first place”. Hence, the methodological frame of the current study does not lend itself to the method of abstracting meaning(s) from theoretical biases and assumptions, as the case with existing IM studies (e.g. Ahmed *et al.*, 2003; Lings, 2004; Gounaris, 2006; 2008). Such previous studies have attempted to define and operationalise the IM concept without a clear grasp of its constituent's structure.

However, the question that remains is how one can demonstrate a rigorous and empirical process of revealing the meaning and the structure of a phenomenon, such as, IM, via a phenomenological research approach? The phenomenological research method indeed provides rigorous procedures through which qualitative researchers can achieve such a task. First, however, it is useful to establish that the phenomenological research method is empirical in that it bases itself in factual data gathered for the purpose of ‘examination’ (von Eckartsberg 1998a). Giorgi (1975, 1979; 1983; 2006) identifies that the phenomenological method “relativizes empiricism”, as it is not contradictory to consider empirical factors from a phenomenological standpoint. He further explains that phenomenological research method embodies a general structure of ‘shareable’, ‘replicable’ observed events arrived at ‘through the examination of specific, situated instances’. Similarly, several phenomenological studies, such as, Fischer & Wertz (1979, p.136) emphasize, “by empirical I refer to a) my reflection upon actual events, and b) my making available to colleagues the data and steps of analysis that led to my findings so that they might see for themselves whether and how they could come to similar findings.”

Again, von Eckartsberg (1998a) provides the general systematic frame through which phenomenology as a qualitative research method can be used to conceptualise concrete structural phenomenon:

First, I report and describe – narratization – and then I think further about something in order to conceptualize it. I keep asking: What does it mean? What does it say? What is concealed in it? What becomes revealed through dwelling in it patiently? What secret lies hidden therein? [What is this kind of experience like? How does the lived world present the experience to me?] This is the reflective attitude, that is, openness and listening to Being in all its particular manifestations (von Eckartsberg, 1998a, p.16).



Such a systematic process although tedious, begins with the first step of ‘expression’ and ‘description’, thus:

expressing a particular experience that I specify and identify by giving account of it, by trying to bring it to as full as accurate an articulation as possible. I create life-text. From there, I move toward the reflective study of this description, focusing on the essential meaning-constituents contained therein, the “experience moments” (van Kaam), the “meaning units (Giorgi), the “themes and scenes” (W. Fischer), or the “psychological plot” (von Eckartsberg), which can be inductively synthesized into an essential, structurally integrated description of the universally valid meaning of the phenomenon under consideration (von Eckartsberg, 1998a, p. 16).

Arguably, the above procedures are far more likely to yield a better scientific analysis, in terms of how textual data are reflected in the descriptive narrative than when phenomenal meanings are otherwise abstracted and formalised. In accord with this, Giorgi (1997) provides a general outline of how the established frame for conducting qualitative research method can be adapted to conform to descriptive phenomenological research paradigm. He devises five basic minimum criteria namely: (1) Collection of verbal data, (2) The reading of the data, (3) The breaking of the data into parts, (4) The organisation and expression of the data from a disciplinary perspective, and (5) The synthesis and summary of the data for purposes of communication to the academic community. Each of these steps however, as outlined below, allows for procedural variations. This means that each step is ‘neither exclusive nor exhaustive’ (Giorgi , 1997).

### **3.3.1 Data collection:**

Data can be collected by straightforward description, interview or a combination of both. In either case, the questions are generally broad and open-ended so that the participants can have sufficient opportunity to express their viewpoints extensively. As what is sought, is a concrete and detailed description of the participants' experiences and viewpoints as accurately as possible. When interviews are used, they should be audio recorded and transcribed.

### **3.3.2 The reading of the data:**

The phenomenological approach is a holistic one, therefore one would have to read the whole data before beginning any analysis of it in order to gain and only retain a complete (whole) sense of the data. One does not try to 'thematize' any aspect of the description based upon this first whole reading. It is the purpose of the subsequent (analytical) steps to highlight what is relevant given the purpose of the analysis.

### **3.3.3 The dividing of the data into parts:**

Since phenomenology is concerned with meanings the basis of which is the division of the data into parts through meaning discrimination. This presupposes the prior assumption of a disciplinary perspective, i.e. adopting a management perspective (as in this study) for management research analysis. Additionally, the perspective assumption presupposes a set that is sensitive to the phenomenon under investigation. In other words, the management research analysis should be sensitive to the phenomenon of IM domain field. In any case, based upon a process of meaning discrimination, one goes through the entire description constituting parts known as 'meaning units'. This purely descriptive term signifies that a certain meaning, relevant

to the study that would be clarified further is contained within the segregated unit. Operationally, a slower rereading of the participants' description forms the relevant meaning units and each time that the researcher experiences a transition in meaning in the description, he or she marks the place and continues to read until the next meaning unit is discriminated and so on. The end of this step is a series of meaning units still expressed in the participants' own everyday language.

The principle guiding this step is that the parts must be determined by criteria that are consistent with the scientific discipline one's study is situated. For example, as [Giorgi \(1997\)](#) illustrates, one could say that one could make a 'meaning unit' out of each sentence, but a sentence is a unit of grammar and may or may not be sensitive to the management research aspect of IM description. This explains why adopting an attitude that is sensitive to the domain field of IM is crucial, as well as to the IM phenomenon. The 'meaning units' do not exist in the descriptions by themselves, but are constituted by the attitude and activity of the researcher. This adoption of an unspecified attitude is unique to the descriptive phenomenological approach, which means that the descriptive phenomenological approach is 'discovery oriented'.

Thus, the disciplinary perspective brought to bear upon the expressions, i.e. the data, cannot pretend to exhaust all of the implications of the description, but only IM ones. I would achieve this by explicating the in-depth IM disciplinary meanings contained within the the data. Therefore, in order to discover meanings in the data, I need to adopt an attitude open-enough to let unexpected meanings evolve and/or emerge. Alternatively, as [Giorgi \(1997\)](#) suggests, I could let my professional sensitivity and spontaneity function so that relevant meanings can be extrapolated.

### **3.3.4 Organisation and expression of raw data into one's disciplinary language:**

Once the meaning units are established, they have to be examined, probed and redescribed so that the disciplinary value of each unit can be made more explicit and relevant to one's field of study. This is where the method of free imaginative variation plays a crucial role in helping to establish the essential elements in the light of the topic under investigation vis-à-vis one's discipline of study. Participants usually describe their concrete experiences or express their views from the perspective of everyday language. The disciplinary perspective used for analysis, e.g. management discipline or the discipline of social sciences, is often narrower than that of everyday life expressions. That is why such a transformation of participants' everyday language is required and necessary. Such transformations have to be expressed in terms relevant to the specific topic under investigation and the field of study. The key point in this step therefore, is that the statements of the participants are transformed by the researcher to be in accord with the subject discipline being utilised following the process of free imaginative variation.

### **3.3.5 Expressing the structure of the phenomenon:**

Once each meaning unit has been essentialised according to the proper disciplinary perspective, and redescribed in the language of the discipline, more or less the same process is applied to the transformed meaning units in order to determine which are essential for the phenomenon under investigation and which are not. Thus, with the help of free imaginative variation the researcher redescribes the essential structure of the concrete account from the perspective of the discipline. Whilst a structure can be based on one participant's account/expression, it is desirable to use more than one participant.

However, it is likely that a study with many participants will produce several typical structures rather than one. Therefore, for the sake of simplicity, Giorgi (1997) recommends that the researcher should always try to derive a single structure (synthesis) for all of the participants in the study. Nevertheless, he cautions that this is not a mandatory requirement in descriptive phenomenological research, as such, the researcher should not force the data into a single structure. One can only collapse the entire data into a single structure if the data lend themselves to the process. Otherwise, the researcher can write as many structures as required. For example, if a study is conducted with five participants, the results could be a single structure, or five structures derived from each subject – or anywhere in between.

Two issues implied in the above process perhaps require further clarification. Firstly, the issue of the question of appropriate language for each discipline should be consistent with phenomenological theory. That is, the concepts and terms used in expressing the insights gained through the study should be phenomenologically grounded. This is crucial, and therefore part of my task as the researcher is to introduce appropriate disciplinary terms in phenomenological grounded ways. One cannot simply use the participants' words because they were given from the perspective of everyday language. Hence, participants' expressions must be taken up, examined, and be redescribed more rigorously from the perspective of a chosen discipline.

Secondly, the issue of the description of results as structure(s). Structures can be understood as essences and their relationships. What is important about structures is not so much the parts as such, but the interrelationships among the parts that they

exhibit. More over, structures are not end in themselves. Rather, according to Giorgi (1997), who uses statistics as illustrative analogy, structures represent ‘measures of central tendency’, and express how the phenomenon under investigation coheres or converges. However, there are also differentiations or variations that have to be accounted for that would correspond to ‘measures of dispersion’ as in statistics. Consequently, once the structures have been delineated, the researcher has to go back to the raw data and render intelligible the clusters of variation that are also contained in the data. Thus, the ultimate outcome of phenomenological scientific analyses is not just the ‘essential structure’, but also, the structure in relation to the varied manifestations of an essential identity.

For example, a consistent structure of IM that could emerge from my descriptive phenomenological data might be comprised of essential identity known as ‘Employee Motivation’. However, given that employee motivation might have several variations through which it manifests, it is important to highlight such variations. For example, employees’ feeling of motivation could be due to a number of factors including the nature of reward being offered, e.g. praise, employees’ involvement in the decision-making process, e.g. through internal communication, and a feeling of empowerment, which can arise from allowing employees a certain level of control/discretion over their duties and responsibilities.

### **3.4 Critique of qualitative research**

Recent years have seen a string of ‘new voices’ (e.g. Miles & Huberman, 1994; Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Creswell, 1998; 2003; Winter, 2000; Morse *et al.*, 2002; Golafshani, 2003; Cho & Trent, 2006; Saunders *et al.*, 2007) engage in substantial

reflection regarding the nature and discipline of qualitative research. Much of this reflection reveals the procedural constraints inherent in establishing credibility in a qualitative research study. The focus of such reflection includes the boundaries of qualitative research, methods of data verification and validation as well as the procedures for establishing reliability and validity. Whatever may be the rationale behind such self-questioning, of interest to this study is the controversy surrounding the issue of reliability and validity in qualitative research inquiry.

The multi-method approach inherent in qualitative research means that qualitative researchers are entangled in a web of confusing array of terms or cross-paradigmatic notions used to address the question of reliability and validity in its research discipline, as often, “the same words refer to different meanings” (Giorgi 1988, p.167). Therefore, this section will focus on the difficulty and the confusion surrounding how to establish reliability and validity in qualitative research inquiry with a view to delineating the ecological validity of this study. The discussion begins by highlighting the general debate on reliability and validity within both the qualitative and the quantitative research traditions. Such a discussion is useful in a number of ways. It will put into perspective the current issues surrounding reliability and validity within the general research discipline. Secondly, it will illuminate the arguments for and against reliability and validity in terms of their relevance to quantitative and qualitative research paradigms. Thirdly, it will provide the frame through which to establish and understand better the validity of the current study.

Further discussion will then proceed with the review of the reliability and validity issues specific to the discipline of qualitative research. Finally, this section will culminate in a more specific commentary highlighting the different ways through which validity can be established in qualitative research with a view to subsequently elaborating the descriptive phenomenological perspective on validity. Perhaps, it is useful to establish at this point that this study takes the view that the concept of validity remains relevant as a way of establishing rigor and safeguarding the integrity of a scientific qualitative study. Such a view is consistent with *Morse et al., (2002)*, who recognise the relevance of validity in qualitative research. They emphasize the use of verification strategies that are specific to and inherent in each strategy of inquiry within qualitative research as appropriate and relevant to establishing validity.

#### **3.4.1 Validity and reliability in quantitative research**

Social scientists are arguably confused with the concepts of ‘reliability’ and ‘validity’ in the wider research discipline. *Winter (2000)* identifies that the notions of accuracy of findings and consistency, i.e. replicability of measurements, which all together refer to validity do seem to be attributed to reliability. In general terms, validity on the one hand is concerned with two common strands – whether the means of measurement are accurate, and whether the means are actually measuring what they are intended to measure. On the other hand, if such means of measurement is consistent and produces the same effect under the same conditions, then reliability is considered to have been achieved. However, the definition of reliability and its confusion with validity poses the greatest level of threat to establishing rigor in quantitative research, as “the notions of accuracy, more commonly attributed to validity, appear to be associated with reliability also” (*Winter, 2000, p.3*). Winter makes the point that quantitative



researchers more commonly attribute the degree of replicability to reliability than to validity. Whatever the arguments and differences in classification however, it seems the two concepts of accuracy and replicability indeed represent the significant aspects of reliability and validity in quantitative research.

The concepts of reliability and validity are generally viewed primarily as ‘positivist epistemology’, which are used to illustrate the consistency and objectivity of a quantitative study (Winter, 2000; Collis & Hussey, 2003). Quantitative study allows the researcher to engage with the object of investigation through hypotheses generation and testing. Researchers often employ words, such as, variables, sample, and population to describe terms in quantitative terminologies. In quantitative research, there is emphasis on causal relationships, information can be quantified and summarised in form of numbers, mathematical processes are commonly employed in data analysis, and results are expressed in statistical terminologies. Reliability in quantitative research is generally viewed as the extent to which results are consistent over time and are accurate representation of the total population under study. Thus, as Bodgan & Biklen (1998) notes, if the established results of a particular study can be reproduced using a similar methodology, then the study is considered as reliable.

Kirk & Miller (1986) refer to three types of reliability in quantitative research – (i) the degree to which a measurement repeatedly remains the same, (ii) the stability of the measurement overtime, and (iii) the similarity of measurement within a given time period. Thus, results should be similar on a stable measure, and a high degree of stability indicates a high degree of reliability, which implies that the results can be replicated or reproduced. Similarly, Hammersley (1987, p.69) notes that “an account

is valid or true if it represents accurately those features of the phenomena that it is intended to describe, explain or theorise”. Simply, validity in quantitative research refers to whether the instrument of measurement ‘hit the bull’s eye’ of the phenomenon under investigation.

However, such univocal characterisation of reliability and validity concepts in quantitative terms has often provoked the ire of qualitative thinkers, such as, Guba (1981), Lincoln & Guba (1985), and Maxwell (1992). They contend that such notions of validity and reliability as contrived, only serve a quantitative logical-empirical<sup>9</sup> agenda. Yet, the concepts of reliability and validity represent two overarching areas in which the discipline of research has imposed upon qualitative research inquiry the criteria for establishing rigor and credibility.

### **3.4.2 Validity and reliability in qualitative research**

Miles & Huberman (1994) observe that qualitative researchers were initially concerned with how to convince deductionist-positivists that naturalistic qualitative research method is not biased or imprecise in their definitions and conclusions. Recent events, however, have seen increasing number of new breed of qualitative writers (e.g. Guba, 1981; Lincoln & Guba, 1985) demanding the reconceptualisation of the quantitative vocabulary e.g. content validity, construct validity, being used to define and assess the question of reliability and validity in qualitative research discipline. Qualitative scholars, as mentioned above, reject what they label the ‘positivistic epistemological agenda’ regarding the issue of reliability and validity in the research tradition. These scholars (e.g. Guba, 1981) adopt their own nomenclature in

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<sup>9</sup> Logical-empirical in the sense used applies to the deductive discovery of empirical theories based on (abstraction) a cognitive process of mathematical and/or statistical measurements.

addressing the issue of reliability and validity. With the result that a confusing array of terms, such as, ‘trustworthiness’, ‘authenticity’, ‘goodness’, ‘verisimilitude’, ‘believability’, ‘adequacy’, ‘plausibility’, ‘validation’ and ‘credibility’ now features prominently in qualitative research circles (See, for example, Guba, 1981; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Kvale, 1989; Wolcott, 1990; Maxwell, 1992; Denzin & Lincoln 2005).

Despite attempts at *relabelling* the concepts employed in evaluating the rigorous nature of its scientific research, the qualitative research discipline has continued to come under attack regarding its method of establishing the reliability and the validity of its enterprise. Quantitative researchers, according to Denzin & Lincoln (2005, p.8) are sometimes highly critical and often tend to dismiss qualitative research study as the work of “journalists or soft scientists...who write fiction, not science, and ... have no way of verifying their truth statements.” Other reliability and validity issues confronting qualitative research, as Bryman (1988) observes, include access, problem of ensuring tight interpretation, as well as the problem of data analysis, as Miles & Huberman (1994) corroborate.

Although recently, (see Miles & Huberman, 1994) qualitative data have come to be perceived as symbolic in enhancing the process of establishing validity and reliability in qualitative research, they are nonetheless viewed as needing meaningful interpretation and response (Patton, 1980). The lack of systematic data analytical procedure and tighter interpretation mechanisms is often viewed as contributory factors to the difficulty in understanding the scientific nature of qualitative research, especially, with regard to the reliability and validity of its findings.

However, [Miles & Huberman \(1994\)](#) offer some positive thoughts regarding the reliability of qualitative (data) research. They note, for instance, that data from qualitative inquiry focuses on naturally occurring, ordinary events in natural settings, which implies that qualitative researchers have a stronger grip on what ‘real life’ is like than their quantitative counterparts. Thus, qualitative data is generally believed to have local ‘groundedness’ in the sense that data is collected in close proximity to the specific situation i.e. site or setting in which the phenomenon under investigation is occurring, rather than through the mail or over the phone. [Miles & Huberman \(1994\)](#) further argue that the possibility for understanding latent, underlying, or non-obvious issues is much stronger in qualitative research, and thus, should constitute a strand of reliability criterion in qualitative research. Implicit in the above assertion is the assumption that the influences of the local context strengthens the quality of data in qualitative research, since, as [Miles & Huberman \(1994\)](#) claim, such local influences have not been stripped away, and therefore, should be considered as a way of evaluating scientific rigor in qualitative research.

Whilst such an assumption may be considered as a way of evaluating the extent to which one can have confidence in a researcher’s competence to conduct a qualitative research following established norms, it remains to be seen how local influences determine the reliability and the validity of one’s qualitative research investigation. Moreover, the methodological procedures involved in qualitative research, as [Denzin & Lincoln \(2005\)](#) recognise, have evolved recently to embrace data collection through non-traditional sources including telephones, emails and audio visuals. This means that there is a possibility that qualitative researchers may have begun embracing other data collection methods divorced from local influences in which the phenomenon

under investigation is occurring. However, the question of reliability and validity in qualitative research continues to generate tensions and dissonant views amongst qualitative writers. Bemoaning the dissonance in viewpoints amongst qualitative writers, [Miles & Huberman \(1994\)](#) comment:

The battles in this domain have been extensive, and they continue. Many interpretivist researchers take the position that there is “no fact of the matter” (e.g., Schwandt, 1990) and suggest by extension that it is not really possible to specify a criteria for good qualitative work – and that the effort to do so is somehow expert-centred and exclusionary” ([Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 277](#)).

The above notion summarises why it may not be surprising to note that the works of qualitative scholars, as [Denzin & Lincoln \(2005\)](#) remark, can be debunked as unscientific or only subjective. This alerts us to why several qualitative writers (e.g. [Guba, 1981](#); [Guba & Lincoln, 1985; 1994](#); [Creswell & Miller, 2000](#)) resort to various terminologies in an attempt to divert attention and to differentiate the process of establishing validity of a qualitative research study. The major contention stems from a belief that the notion of validity does not carry the same connotations in qualitative inquiry as in quantitative study. Qualitative writers (e.g. [Guba & Lincoln, 1985; 1994](#); [Creswell & Miller, 2000](#); [Denzin & Lincoln, 2005](#)) maintain, for instance, that validity in qualitative research involves determining whether the processes that led to the findings from such study are credible and accurate from the point of view of the researcher, the participants, or the readers of the study.

Winter (2000, p.3) observes that reliability and validity in qualitative research “is either useful or possible in situations concerning highly complex and transient circumstances: namely those that involve the lives, thoughts and behaviour of actors.” The above view has consequently generated a different controversy in which the notions of reliability and validity as defined in quantitative terms are perceived to be ‘inadequate’ in the context of qualitative inquiry (See, Guba, 1981; Guba & Lincoln, 1985; 1994). Therefore, in attempting to backstage the reliability and validity debate with the parallel taxonomy of ‘trustworthiness’, which contains four aspects of credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability, Guba (1981) particularly hopes that the discipline of qualitative research will begin to be appreciated based on its own merit rather than from the lenses of quantitative ideologues. Guba (1981) identifies that within the taxonomy of ‘trustworthiness’ is an array of strategies for establishing validity in qualitative study, such as, member checks, audit trail, categorizing, participants’ confirmation, peer debriefing, negative case analysis, structural corroboration and referential material adequacy. Discussing this array of terms will unduly increase the scope of this section, and therefore, will not be pursued.

Of relevance however, is the need to highlight that the concepts of reliability and validity cannot be universal or discreetly identifiable with any research discipline. Hence, in particular, Winter (2000, p.3) contends that “the concept of ‘validity’ defies extrapolation from, or categorisation within, any research project.” In sum, qualitative researchers in an attempt to ignore in quantitative terminologies, the concepts of reliability and validity as yardsticks for the evaluation of the scientific nature of qualitative research, have tended to espouse what they consider to be more appropriate terms. In this sense, the taxonomy of ‘trustworthiness’ is widely perceived as

encompassing appropriate terminologies for categorising validity and reliability in qualitative research circles. Hence, the array of terms, such as, ‘researchers lens’, ‘paradigm assumptions’, ‘triangulation’, ‘disconfirming evidence’, ‘researcher reflexivity’, ‘expert judges’, ‘member checking’, ‘prolonged engagement in the field’, ‘collaboration’, ‘the audit trail’ ‘thick rich descriptions’, and ‘peer debriefing’ constitute the yardsticks for evaluating rigour in qualitative research inquiry, as seen in the works of [Creswell & Miller \(2000\)](#).

Whilst some aspects of the above terms remain widely fundamental and appropriate to discussions of validity in the wider qualitative research discipline, they are in fact, “less likely to be valued or recognized as indices of rigor” ([Morse \*et al.\*, 2002, p. 3](#)). For instance, [Guba \(1981, p.90\)](#) notes that the criteria set out in their taxonomy of ‘trustworthiness’ were “primitive”, and therefore warns they should not be considered as a set of guidelines in qualitative research for establishing validity. Yet, many qualitative studies, notably, [Creswell & Miller \(2000\)](#)<sup>10</sup> ignore such a warning and continue to advocate primarily the taxonomy of ‘trustworthiness’ as the appropriateness validity criteria in qualitative research. All of the criteria they propose can substitute for neither validity nor reliability in all scientific qualitative inquiry. For instance, although triangulation seems generally acceptable as a verification criterion in the wider research discipline, it cannot on its own substitute or replace the need to demonstrate the validity of a given (qualitative) study.

Two inherent flaws are obvious from [Creswell & Miller \(2000\)](#), and therefore, warrant some commentary. (1) They do not specify the nature and the depth of information

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<sup>10</sup>[Creswell & Miller \(2000\)](#) in their study - *Determining Validity in Qualitative Inquiry* imply that the procedures within the framework of ‘trustworthiness’ can also be utilised as a criteria for obtaining validity in a qualitative research.

research logs should contain in order to be viewed as acceptable and adequate in the verification process. (2) It is not clear as to whether students and faculty members as they refer are the same as peer debriefers. Instead, they conclude that the use of such specific validity procedures must acknowledge the lens being employed in line with the paradigm assumptions of the researcher. Such conclusions lack clarity. If anything, [Creswell & Miller \(2000\)](#) appear to imply that the criterion for establishing validity rests with the researcher's methodological paradigm, rather than any external procedures. This lack of clarity underscores the general pitfalls in providing clearly definable and consistent procedures for establishing reliability and validity in qualitative research.

Commenting specifically on the general pitfalls in understanding the question of rigour in analysing qualitative research data, [Miles & Huberman \(1994, p.277\)](#) observe, "some accounts are better than others", whilst [Saunders \*et al.\*, \(2007, p.478\)](#) rightly affirm that "there is no standardised approach to the analysis of qualitative data." The above views imply that the controversy surrounding the question of establishing rigour, and ultimately, reliability and validity of qualitative research findings has yet to go away. Despite the above views, it is fair to acknowledge that possible conflicts indeed exist in the general understanding of the notion of validity and reliability within the general research discipline. This suggests that the two might be concepts entirely relative to the researcher and the philosophical paradigm in which his or her beliefs are situated.



However, some notions (e.g. Saunders *et al.*, 2007)<sup>11</sup> show level of accuracy and consistency in providing a broad understanding of the issue of validity and reliability in general research discipline, and particularly in qualitative research (e.g. Morse *et al.*, 2002; Giorgi, 2002)<sup>12</sup>. Morse *et al.*, (2002), for instance, argue that although the strategies as contained in the taxonomy of ‘trustworthiness’ may be useful in attempting to evaluate rigor, they do not in themselves ensure rigor. They emphasize the need to address the issue of reliability and validity in qualitative research through specific verification techniques inherent in each specific strategy of inquiry. In their view, “verification takes into account the varying philosophical perspectives inherent in qualitative inquiry, thus, the strategies used will be specific to, and inherent in, each methodological approach. At the same time, the terminology remains consistent with science” (Morse *et al.*, 2002, p.14).

Resonating with the above view is the complex historical climate (see Denzin & Lincoln, 2005) from which qualitative research emerged, which may indeed be crucial to determining the common frame through which to establish and better understand the validity of a given qualitative study. As such, the specific criteria for establishing validity must be embedded as constituent parts of the validation strategies adopted in each specific paradigm or strategy of inquiry (e.g. Narrative, Grounded Theory, Phenomenology) within a given qualitative study. Specifically, Morse *et al.*, (2002) and Giorgi (2002) advocate that such validating strategies must be consistent and

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<sup>11</sup> Saunders *et al.*, (2007) suggest on the one hand, that reliability is the extent to which data collection techniques will produce consistent outcomes whilst validity is the extent to which research findings are accurately what they profess to be about.

<sup>12</sup> From the perspective of descriptive phenomenology, Giorgi (2002) argues that the concepts of reliability and validity remain relevant, and cannot be ignored just as in any other scientific research discipline. His view is of relevance despite the fact that it pertains more closely to phenomenological based qualitative research inquiry.

systematic, and designed to ensure that every constituent part of the analytical frame allows for iterative behaviour.

The validating technique in the descriptive phenomenological research method articulated by Giorgi (1985a) resonates with the above viewpoint, and lends itself suitably to my proposed validity criteria. Giorgi's descriptive phenomenological method is such that the foundational elements of reliability and validity are inherent and embedded in its analytical steps. In other words, the analytical techniques, which also constitute the validity criteria, allow for iterative behaviour and cross-movements between the different analytical steps which are interlocked. This iterative behaviour does not rely on external procedures, but places upon the researcher, ultimately, the burden of demonstrating and establishing the reliability and the validity of his/her study from the point in which the analysis of data begins.

Given the above, it is pertinent at this point to emphasise that validity in the current study will be attained by employing strictly the same analytical procedures for conducting descriptive phenomenological research as stipulated by Giorgi (1985a). The analytical procedures, as exemplified under section 5.2, include (1) reading the entire scripts to get a sense of whole, (2) establishing meaning units, (3) transformation of meaning units, (4) determination of the structure of the phenomenon under investigation, (5) synthesis of transformed meaning units and (6) development of a general description from the transformed data. These analytical steps are robust and powerful, and as several studies (e.g. Polkinghorne, 1989; Giorgi, 2002; Ehrich, 2003) attest, have formed the basis upon which reliability and validity have been established in a number of empirical qualitative research studies. It follows from this

standpoint therefore, that this study will not employ any of the terms that comprises of the taxonomy of trustworthiness, i.e. external procedures such as triangulation, member checks, expert judges, audit trail or research logs in order to anchor its validity. Whilst the above position may be warranted in a descriptive phenomenological based qualitative study, as would be clarified further in this chapter, it also seems to offer a way out of the confusion relating to the question of establishing rigour i.e. reliability and validity within the discipline of qualitative research. Not least, there can be far reaching implications in advocating primarily, for example, the taxonomy of 'trustworthiness' as the common criteria for establishing the rigour of a qualitative research study, given the different methodological constraints inherent in its discipline.

For instance, researchers using member checking are far more likely to draw the validity line based on participants' confirmation or disconfirmation of their analyses. When in fact the analyses being presented to such participants for validation except perhaps, in case study and some narrative inquiry, may have already been decontextualized, synthesized, and abstracted from the original viewpoints of such participants. Therefore, it may be difficult for such participants to accurately recognise themselves or recollect their own individual factual accounts or experiences in the presented analyses. *Morse et al., (2002)* clarify this point by arguing there is a tendency amongst qualitative researchers to interpret the participants' judgements i.e. confirmation or disconfirmation of the analysis as valid results, when in fact, such judgements might obscure or threaten validity.

On the one hand, although member checking seems to be an attractive verification criterion in a qualitative research study, Guba & Lincoln (1981) warn strongly against defining verification in terms of whether or not such members judge the analysis to be correct or wrong, as their judgements might in the process actually hamper the ability to discern rigor. On the other hand, whilst an audit trail may be useful in demonstrating the proof of the decisions made throughout the research process, they do very little to identify or enhance the quality of those decisions, their justifications or the responsiveness or sensitivity of the qualitative researcher to the data. Morse *et al.*, (2002) particularly caution that an audit trail can neither guide the research process nor ensure an excellent outcome, except for the use of documenting the course of the development of the completed analysis. Thus, in providing a useful contrast between verification and the issue of validity in qualitative research inquiry, they conclude that verification refers to the mechanisms used during the research process to ensure reliability and validity, and in turn, ensure that rigor has been subsequently attained.

Accordingly, verification simply means “the process of checking, confirming, making sure, and being certain”, which helps the inquirer to “identify when to continue, stop or modify the research process in order to achieve ‘reliability’ and ‘validity’ and ensure rigor” (Morse *et al.*, 2002, p. 9-10). Within these mechanisms are verification strategies<sup>13</sup> that ensure both reliability and validity, such as, (1) ‘methodological

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<sup>13</sup> Methodological coherence ensures there is congruence between the research question and the components of the method applied. Sampling adequacy or purposive sampling entails ensuring that data is gathered from participants who best represent or have adequate knowledge or experience of the research topic. Collecting and analysing data simultaneously helps in developing dynamic relationship between sampling, data collection and data analysis, which ‘forms a mutual interaction between what is known and what needs to be known’. Thinking theoretically entails that ideas emerging from data are reconfirmed in new data, which gives rise to new ideas, which in turn, must be verified in data already generated. The theory development moves with deliberation between a micro perspective of the data and a macro conceptual/theoretical understanding. Thus, this can be developed: (1) as an outcome of the research

coherence', (2) 'sampling sufficiency/adequacy', (3) 'collecting and analysing data simultaneously', (4) 'thinking theoretically', and (5) 'theory development'. Arguably, as Giorgi (2002) concurs, if the above verification strategies are followed strictly and appropriately, the researcher is far more likely to be compelled to correct both the direction of the analysis and the development of the study as it should be, thus, ensuring that reliability and validity have both been attained in the study.

Although a distinction is being drawn between the verification strategies involved in establishing the validity of a qualitative study and actually ensuring such validity, it may in fact be more accurate to think in terms of ensuring tightness and congruence in such validation process. Central to this is the possibility that the verification strategies can be self-correcting. Since, as Morse *et al.*, (2002) affirm, the verification strategies are embedded in every step of the research inquiry, the researcher can quickly identify and correct errors before such errors are built in to the developing model or the emerging structure of the phenomenon under investigation, but more importantly, before such errors can subvert the analysis. This enhances the iterative behaviour of the qualitative researcher, as he or she is able to ensure congruence amongst for example, question formulation, literature critique, participants' recruitment, data collection protocol, and analysis by monitoring design protocol and implementation.

Therefore, rather than lay claim to some external verification mechanisms, such as, expert judges or the use of participants as co-researchers/external judges or validators, as a description of how validity was attained, the responsibility should rest on the researcher to demonstrate clearly consistent validating mechanisms inherent within

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process rather than being adopted as a framework to move the analysis along, and (2) as a template for comparison and further development of theory if considered appropriate to the study's focus.

each frame of qualitative inquiry. In other words, as *Morse et al., (2002)* argue, the mechanism for establishing and ensuring the validity of a qualitative study must be inherent in the analytical procedures within each specific strategy of qualitative research inquiry. Perhaps, from the perspective of this study, a proper understanding of establishing validity in descriptive phenomenological inquiry warrants further consideration in order to buttress my objection to the use of external validating mechanisms, such as, expert judges or audit trails.

### **3.5 Towards the validity of descriptive phenomenological research method**

Generally, qualitative studies often claim to use more than one expert judge to review their analyses and then keep what such expert judges have purportedly validated. *Giorgi (1989)* contends that such validation technique can be problematic along several fronts from a descriptive phenomenological perspective. His argument on the use of expert judges is pertinent to my position, and therefore, will be employed to illustrate my objection to the use of external validating techniques, such as, expert judges. *Giorgi (1989)* argues that the use of expert judges is borrowed from the logical empirical theoretical perspectives to serve a phenomenological viewpoint. By implication, this means that the researcher invites a judge(s) to check on his or her empirical achievements with the effect that such external validations often result in an empirical judgement rather than a phenomenological one. That is, the judge ascertains whether all of the themes listed under the category actually fit the category, or the judge might check whether the meaning units were correctly transformed in actual practice and so on.

My contention stems from the fact that checking up on actual transformations or factual achievements in phenomenological inquiry is nothing short of an empirical check. Since, as [Giorgi's \(1989, p.77\)](#) concurs, the “judge affirms, factually, what the phenomenologist, in this case the researcher, has sorted and organised.” In other words, to claim validity in such a way is to deviate from the phenomenological framework which emphasizes achieving essential meaning with empirical or imaginative variations, as I indicated in [section 3.2.3](#). Thus, the use of expert judges in such a way is redundant from a descriptive phenomenological perspective, since, as [Giorgi \(1989, p.77\)](#) further makes clear, “the factual achievements have to be viewed as mere examples of possible range of alternatives.”

However, there can be a different scenario in which expert judges could be argued to be trained phenomenologists. As such, a claim might be made that what such judges do is check the researcher's results in a genuinely phenomenological way. This exercise, according to [Giorgi \(1989\)](#), is again not useful, and not a validity check. Since arguably, for example, if a judge does find exactly what the researcher finds it becomes a confirmation not a validation, or argued differently, another validation of what the original researcher has already validated. This is because the expert judge is most likely to follow the same validation processes or techniques employed originally by the researcher, and in that sense, might or might not be helpful. However, there is no guarantee that another judge will not differ from both the first judge and the researcher. In which case, the profound reason for not using expert judges in a descriptive phenomenological study is buttressed thus:

because of the meaning of evidence within phenomenology which involves the use of free imaginative variation which ought already include the perspective of an empirical other....if the judges find something other than what the [original] researcher found, then it is not merely a matter of [the researcher] leaving something out, but of the judge then turning into a primary researcher himself or herself because he or she has to account for 100% of the data in terms of his or her evidentiary intuition and that can transform the meaning of the data. That is, the judge must present evidence to the original researcher that will convince him or her that a wholly new way of understanding all the data has come about. The difference is that one is dealing with structures or totalities and not discrete elements of data. It is not a matter of partially correcting but of assuming total responsibility of the understanding of the data. Thus, an invitation to a critical other is an invitation from the other to form his or her own unity. In other words, the judge cannot be merely a judge of data, but must become a researcher or total critic in his or her own right. In this sense then, every reader of research report with an appropriate background is a critic. There certainly is dialogue with the scholarly community, and criticisms from the community are welcome. The only point ...is that one does not need a [expert] judge as a halfway critic (Giorgi, 1989, p.77 *italics mine*).

Clearly, and consistent with the above, since phenomenology is based upon intuition of meanings and imaginative variation, space must be given for the researcher to perform the phenomenological operations - i.e. bracketing, phenomenological reduction and free imaginative variation, and there is no way of knowing ahead of time what intuitions will emerge. Moreover, there is no way another person, e.g. expert judge, can enter into the intuition process of another as such. Hence, from a descriptive phenomenological perspective, some of the prevalent external verification or validation strategies that are borrowed from logical empiricism to validate qualitative research may not be useful in the sense in which they are borrowed, as evident in my objection to the idea of validation by expert judges. Involving expert judges in some form or another can be misguided. In other words, and specific to the problem qualitative researchers face:



Regardless of the standard or criteria used to evaluate the goal of rigor, my [*qualitative researchers*] problem remains the same: they are applied after the research is completed, and therefore are used to judge of quality. Standards and criteria applied at the end of the study cannot direct the research as it is conducted, and thus cannot be used proactively to manage threats to reliability and validity” (Morse *et al.*, 2002, p. 16 *italics mine*).

Thus, from the foregoing, it can be argued that the question of reliability and validity in qualitative research inquiry could be better approached from the perspective of the specific strategy of inquiry, i.e. methodological frame within which one operates, rather than employing external procedures, as it might be difficult to draw precisely from competing methodological frames inherent in the discipline of qualitative research.

Echoing the above view, Giorgi (2002) suggests that the issue of validity is best contextualised within the discipline to which one belongs as well as the subfield of specialization that one pursues. Indeed, from descriptive phenomenological research perspective, such viewpoint is appropriate to understanding the basis upon which I intend to situate the ecological validity of this study as opposed to employing the array of qualitative terms and/or quantitative criteria of e.g. test construction, such as, the taxonomy of ‘trustworthiness’, ‘internal validity’, ‘external validity’, ‘content validity’, ‘construct validity’ and ‘criterion validity’.<sup>14</sup> Thus, the validity procedure that informs the general attitude of this study will be consistent with the analytical frame guiding validity from descriptive phenomenological perspective, as evident in the analytical procedures of descriptive phenomenology as devised by Giorgi (1985a; 2002).

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<sup>14</sup> Discussing the validity constructs common in quantitative research inquiry captured above does not fall within the scope of this chapter; hence, further discussion of such is unwarranted. More so, any such discussion will unduly increase the volume of this section.

### 3.6 Understanding this study's ecological validity

Ecological validity refers to the extent to which scientific findings can be generalised from one group to another (Saunders *et al.*, 2007). This relates to whether or not social scientific findings are applicable to people's everyday natural social settings. From a descriptive phenomenological perspective, Giorgi (1985a; 1985b) has attempted to tackle the issue of validity more directly by suggesting that in order for an activity to be considered scientific it must be able to be reproduced by as many researchers as possible within the academic community, the findings must be intersubjectively valid, and there must be a definable method. Although the basis of the above claims remains open to challenge, my position is nonetheless sympathetic to such a standpoint, as can be seen from much of my preceding discussions.

However, merely acknowledging the above view cannot suffice the need to demonstrate the context in which the validity of this study's findings can be better understood. Two schools of thought<sup>15</sup> – Utrecht School (interpretative-hermeneutic) and Duquesne School (descriptive) fundamentally shape modern phenomenology as a qualitative research method. Therefore, understanding the validity of this study minimally warrants first an understanding of the philosophy that underpins these two schools of thought.

#### 3.6.1 Utrecht School

van Manen (1990), a key figure in phenomenological qualitative research was persuaded by the doctrine of the Utrecht School to establish a phenomenological

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<sup>15</sup>There are differences between descriptive and interpretative-hermeneutic phenomenological research, which remain more obvious than any suggested similarities. This is because the two phenomenological procedures derive from different philosophical foundations with different emphasis, and as such, receive different meanings. For more on the similarities and differences between interpretative and descriptive phenomenological research, see Giorgi (1992; 2000) and Mohanty (1987; 1989).

research approach known as hermeneutic-phenomenology. His hermeneutic-phenomenology in many respects has struggled to deny its interpretive phenomenological research origins by integrating other variants of phenomenology. Particularly, van Manen introduced the need to borrow from others' experiences in order to help in the explication of the phenomenon under investigation. As a research method, hermeneutic-phenomenology is a combination of the interpretative and descriptive phenomenology. It integrates the philosophies of Edmund Husserl, Martin Heidegger, and Hans-Georg Gadamer.

The above philosophers espouse a different phenomenological ideological position, which means that the hermeneutic-phenomenology as a phenomenological research method is confusing. This is because the ideological differences amongst the above-mentioned three phenomenologists, as Giorgi (2006) cautions, are too obvious to be ignored or overcome by a single method. Thus, van Manen (1990) acknowledges in his book - "*Researching Lived Experience*" that he had been influenced by the Dutch movement from the Utrecht School and also the German tradition of the 'human science pedagogy' - from where he realises the importance of understanding the meaning of human phenomenon and the living structures of meaning.

van Manen comments concerning hermeneutic-phenomenology:

Hermeneutic-phenomenology tries to be attentive to both terms of its methodology: it is descriptive (phenomenological) methodology because it wants to be attentive to how things appear, it wants to let things speak for themselves; it is an interpretive (hermeneutic) methodology because it claims that there are no such things as uninterpreted phenomena (van Manen, 1990, p. 180).

From the above, it can be seen that hermeneutic-phenomenology as a phenomenological research method neither follows Husserl's methodological thought strictly nor does it follow strictly any of the other two phenomenologists – Heidegger and Gadamer. This makes hermeneutic-phenomenology contradictory in different fronts, as there is doubt on the possibility of integrating the interpretive and descriptive phenomenology as a phenomenological solution. Major flaws in adopting the hermeneutic-phenomenology are highlighted in [Giorgi \(2006\)](#). He questions how such a combined method could 'let the things speak for themselves' if there are no 'uninterpreted phenomena', as [van Manen \(1990\)](#) claims. Such contradiction is no more evident than in van Manen's failure to articulate precisely a systematic and consistent scientific approach (formula) to conducting a phenomenological research study.

[Ehrich \(2003, p.56\)](#) observes, for example, that van Manen "does not provide a step-by-step formula for making sense of a phenomenological 'data'...nor does he (van Manen) use terms such as 'data collection' or 'data analysis'...Instead he identifies ways of 'investigating experience as I live it' and of making sense of the investigations" using the following ideas:

- Use personal experience as a starting point - This might help to provide clues on the nature of the phenomenon.
- Trace etymological sources – This might help to put us in touch with the origins of the word and its original meaning.
- Search for idiomatic phrases – Such phrases can possess interpretive significance.
- Obtain experiential descriptions from others – which meant I could borrow people's experiences in order to arrive to a deeper understanding of a phenomenon.

- Protocol writing – a key way to finding out human experience is to ask informants to write down their experiences.
- Interview – This is a way of gathering experiential materials that might help in explicating concrete experiences.
- Observe – A way of (entering) being immersed into the life-world of individuals is to be a participant and an observer simultaneously.
- Use of experiential descriptions in the literature – Literature, poetry, other story forms, biographies, journals, diaries and logs can serve as important sources of possible human experience.
- Consult the phenomenological literature – Material that has already addressed the topic can be important sources of data and insight.

However, it is fair to acknowledge that hermeneutic-phenomenology as a phenomenological research approach does provide some guidance in terms of phenomenological reflection and writing. For example, the approach recognises the need for a thematic analysis – which involves determining the themes or experiential structures of a phenomenon. This entails establishing the universality (quality/essence) of a phenomenon that makes it what it is. For this procedural understanding to occur, [van Manen \(1990\)](#) recommends free imaginative variation. He also recognises the importance of (uncovering) identifying the thematic aspect of a phenomenon and isolating thematic statements via a three-way approach – holistic, selective and detailed approach.

Nonetheless, the hermeneutic-phenomenology as a phenomenological research method lacks consistency, and appears to be inappropriate to achieving this study's aims. Note, for example, [van Manen \(1990\)](#) does not justify why he conflates interpretive and descriptive phenomenological positions. Clearly, the absence of a logical justification for such conflation seems arbitrary, and indeed, makes it extremely difficult to understand the level at which the hermeneutic-phenomenology

can/should operate. It is important to draw attention to the fact that this study recognises the need for researchers to provide readers and other researchers with a systematic and consistent (interpretive or descriptive) research procedure that would be useful in reproducing different phenomenological ideological positions. Maintaining consistency in phenomenological research method seems more likely to yield credibility in scientific research circles than arbitrary procedure(s). Consistency of phenomenological methods will particularly enable readers and other researchers to reproduce different ideological phenomenological positions without contradictions.

### **3.6.2 Duquesne School**

Van Kaam (1969), Giorgi (1975a; 1975b; 1985a; 1985b) and Colaizzi (1978) are the pioneers of the Duquesne School of thought. They recognise the need to maintain consistency in phenomenological research approach by first separating psychological phenomenology from philosophical phenomenology in the same way that psychology differentiated itself from philosophy as a natural science. In their view, as Giorgi (1985a) emphasises, only through such separation can a definite and clearly defined phenomenological research method be evolved. Fundamentally, the pioneers of the Duquesne school were keen on differentiating phenomenology as a research method from phenomenology as a philosophy. For instance, Giorgi (1985a) in the editor's preface to "*Phenomenological and Psychological Research*" remarks, concerning the lack of rigor and precision in phenomenology as a research method:

I began to concern myself with this state of affairs even as a graduate student and gradually came to a conclusion that psychologists would have to find another way of being rigorous and precise when dealing with more complex human phenomena...I was in this open-ended state of search and expectancy...when I became aware of phenomenology. After questioning, probing, reading, and testing I began to sense a way out of the difficulties. Perhaps in phenomenological thought, and its existential variations, one could

find the foundational framework that would enable psychologists to study in a genuinely scientific way (Giorgi, 1985a, p. viii).

Against such a backdrop, the pioneers of the Duquesne School began by modifying phenomenology to make it more relevant as a scientific research method appropriate to different disciplines of research. One major phenomenological modification was that the original (i.e. ordinary descriptions of the participants) data used in phenomenological study has to be obtained from other individuals who have the knowledge or who may have experienced the phenomenon under investigation.

In a pragmatic sense, as Giorgi (1985a) argues, the climate of self-understanding in science was such that a description of an experience or a phenomenon and the analysis of it by the same person (in this sense, the researcher) was simply unacceptable because of the error of ‘subjective bias’. The concern was that such (*self*)description may unconsciously or directly be serving the purpose of the researcher, and thus he or she proves his or her biases. Such subjectivity is greater compared to obtaining descriptions of a phenomenon from naïve others (e.g. participants) who know nothing of the prejudices of the researcher.

However, the phenomenology literature is unclear as to who originated the phenomenological research method in the Duquesne School. On the one hand, some writers (e.g. Eckartsberg, 1998a) credit Van Kaam (1969) with originating a research method for phenomenology in his doctoral investigation of “Really Feeling Understood”, which sequels his first publication – “*Existential Foundations of Psychology*.” On the other hand, some qualitative scholars (e.g. Polkinghorne, 1989) credit Giorgi (1985a) with untangling the complexity of applying phenomenology into

concrete scientific methodology in a way that analysis and procedures do not have to rely upon the natural sciences. Without presenting all the competing arguments, this study however, recognises that of all the phenomenological writers, Giorgi's works (See, for example, Giorgi, 1985a, 1988; 1989b; 1992; 1997; 2000a; 2000b; 2005; 2006) appear to elaborate-cum-substantiate consistently phenomenology as a robust scientific method in qualitative research circles.

Polkinghorne (1989) identifies that whilst Van Kaam discontinued his development of phenomenological research methods, another group of scholars pioneered by Giorgi in 1975 continued to work with some scholars at Duquesne in order to establish a phenomenological research method independent of Van Kaam. It is worthy of note that the phenomenological research procedure outlined in Giorgi (1975a & 1975b) was an outgrowth of his work with such scholars and his own re-examination of the literature on phenomenology undertaken in 1969 during his stay in Europe. Giorgi's (e.g. Giorgi, 2005; 2006) continuing work on articulating the research praxis on phenomenology is representative of the further outgrowth of his early work with the Duquesne School.

Although differing characteristics have since emerged from the phenomenological research method initially developed by the pioneers of the Duquesne School, there is however, a far greater consensus established amongst them in the early days of their foundational work than with the Utrecht School as shown in Table 3.1, page 157. For instance, unlike the Utrecht School, all three phenomenologists (i.e. van Kaam, Giorgi, & Colaizzi) of the Duquesne School accept a series of analytical steps in which descriptive phenomenological research can be generally conducted in a valid



and reliable manner. These include: (1) the original (naïve) descriptions are divided into units, (2) the units are transformed by the investigator into meanings that are expressed in the discipline's language (field of study) and with respect to the phenomenon under investigation, and (3) these transformations are then combined to create a general description of the phenomenon under investigation. The contributions of van Kaam and Colaizzi are presented below for a holistic understanding of the Duquesne School of thought.

First, Polkinghorne's (1989, p.46) summary of the foundational (general) framework for phenomenological investigation as pioneered by the Duquesne School is highlighted:

1. Gather a number of naïve (actual) descriptions from people who are having or have had the experience of the phenomenon under investigation.
2. Engage in a process of analysing these descriptions so that the researcher comes to a grasp of the constituents or common elements that make the phenomenon what it is.
3. Produce a research report that gives an accurate, clear, and articulate description of the phenomenon. After which the reader of the report should come away with the feeling of having clearly understood the meaning or nature of the phenomenon under investigation.

### **3.6.3 Van Kaam (1969)**

In his study of "Really Feeling Understood", van Kaam proposes six analytical steps for conducting descriptive phenomenological study; (1) The classification of data into categories, (2) The reduction and linguistic transformation of the selections into more precisely descriptive terms, (3) The elimination of those reduced statements developed

in Step 2 that are probably not inherent in the experience under investigation, (4) The first hypothetical identification, (5) Application of the hypotheses to random protocols, and (6) Valid identification. Each of these steps is explained further below.

### ***The classification of data into categories***

In this step, the inquirer is expected to make a listing and preliminary random samples of the descriptive expressions given by informants from the pool of protocols. The list must contain different statements made by the informants, which must be agreed upon and validated through several expert judges. The list consists of the concrete, vague, intricate and overlapping expressions as they appear in the research protocols. In addition to creating a list of the various statements, a percentage of the protocol in which each item on the list has appeared is then worked out before the next step begins. For explanation, one example from Van Kaam's (1969, p.325) original data (interview) protocol which reads, "I feel a hundred pounds less heavy" and "a load off my chest" will be employed to illustrate his proposal on conducting a phenomenological study.

### ***The reduction and linguistic transformation of the selected list into more precise descriptions***

According to Van Kaam, The transformation of the (raw data) original linguistic expressions given by the informants into descriptions in the words of the inquirer is a crucial procedure in the analysis of qualitative phenomenological data. The transformation is not achieved through technical quantitative procedures, such as the transformation of raw scores into standard deviation and mean scores. Rather, the linguistic transformation relies on the inquirer's capacity to understand the meaning of statements as given by informants. The qualitative inquirer can move from a given

statement to its referent – the experience to which it points, and redescribe that experience from a different perspective to show how the experience relates to the phenomenon under investigation. Again, back to the illustrative example offered in Step 1 above – the original protocol statement: “I feel a hundred pounds less heavy” and “a load off my chest” can be linguistically transformed by identifying them as instances of “a feeling of relief” (Van Kaam 1969, p. 325).

The idea here is to reduce the lists given in the original language transcriptions of the informant to a list in the linguistic expression of the inquirer describing elements that might constitute parts of the experience of the (informant) original language transcriptions. In order to increase the intersubjective validity of the transformations, Van Kaam again recommends the agreement of judges that the ‘reduced expressions’ are accurate reflections of the original (expressions) language transcriptions. Next is calculating the percentage of protocols containing these reduced expressions. For example, one could say that “I feel a hundred pounds less heavy” and “a load off my chest” occurred in 50% of the protocols.

***The elimination of reduced elements developed in Step 2 that are probably not inherent in the phenomenon under investigation***

Elements that merely expressed aspects of the (experience) phenomenon that relate to a specific situation and elements that are blending (i.e. seem the same) in several parts are removed from the reduced list.

### ***The first hypothetical identification***

After completing the first three steps – classification, reduction, and element elimination, the resulting list becomes the first hypothetical identification and description of the experience.

### ***Application of the hypotheses to random protocols***

The hypothetical description of Step 4 above is applied to randomly selected (interview) protocols. The description is tested to determine if it contains more than the necessary and sufficient constituents of the phenomenon under investigation. It may also be that some of the protocols contain elements inherent in the phenomenon that have been overlooked in the hypothetical description because of oversight. In such situations, the hypothetical description is then revised, by compressing or expanding its elements. This process may have to be carried out repeatedly with the inherent elements in the structure in a new random sample.

### ***Valid identification***

After the successful completion of the previous steps, the hypothetical description can then be considered a valid identification and description of the phenomenon under investigation. Van Kaam (1969, p.327) however, cautions that the hypothetical descriptions are “evidently valid only for the population represented in the samples.” The hypothetical descriptions are valid to the extent that new cases relating to the phenomenon can be proven not to correspond to the necessary and sufficient constituents contained in the prescribed formula.

#### **3.6.4 Colaizzi (1978)**

Colaizzi proposes several similar steps relevant to validating phenomenological study: These include: (1) Reading the general protocol in order to acquire a feeling for them. (2) The extraction of the phrases or sentences that connect to the phenomenon under investigation. (3) The transformation (reduction) of the phrases as they appear in the protocol into the researcher's language. (4) Cluster individual themes into more general themes. This step requires moving back and forth between the meaning units and the evolving hypothetical lists until the individual themes are accurately reflected in the clusters. (5) The researcher then returns to each subject to reconfirm the findings to ascertain their relevance to the entire protocol.

Polkinghorne (1989) identifies that Colaizzi's validation process begins with the researcher reading the entire subject protocol in order to 'acquire a feeling of them' with a view to extracting significant themes to be transformed into the researcher's own language. This is similar to van Kaam's (phenomenological) reduction process in which the statements as they appear in the protocols are transformed into the linguistic expression of the researcher. The significant themes must accurately reflect the essential point of each subject protocol statement. The next step is to 'cluster' the individual themes to produce a further reduction into general themes that are common to all the subject (or participants') protocols. The clustering process has some similarity with van Kaam's application of the hypotheses to randomly selected protocol.

In this sense, Colaizzi's method allows the researcher to move 'back and forth' between the significant themes and the (successive) revised hypothetical expressions until (saturation) the themes accurately reflect the clusters. The result of this 'back and

forth' process is then regarded as the findings of the study i.e. the essential structural definition of the phenomenon under investigation. However, there are noticeable differences between the validation method as proposed by van Kaam (1969) and the method proposed by Colaizzi (1978). For instance, the final step in Colaizzi's method that is not included in van Kaam's validation process is such that the researcher is required to return to each subject protocol to recheck or reconfirm how his/her transformed descriptive results compare with the informant's account of the phenomenon. This final check allows the researcher to verify/reconfirm whether any aspects of the account relating to the phenomenon have been omitted. Any relevant new data that results from this process is then worked into a revised, final description.

In addition, Colaizzi did not recommend the use of expert judges in his validation process and did not calculate the percentages of statements across protocols as van Kaam recommends. Table 3.2 in page 159 offers some comparative perspectives on the two major strands of phenomenology as a qualitative research method represented in van Manen (Utrecht School) and Amadeo Giorgi (Duquesne School).

**Table 3.1****Summary of characteristics of three phenomenological research methods of the Duquesne School**

<b>Colaizzi</b>	<b>van Kaam</b>	<b>Giorgi</b>
Read the subject protocol in order to a feeling of them	Preliminary grouping of research protocol, which must be approved by expert judges. Final groupings presents percentages of these categories in that sample	The investigator reads the entire subject protocol to get a sense of the whole
Return to each protocol and extract significant statements	The investigator uses the reduction as a process of elimination of vague and overlapping expressions of the original protocol to a precise description. Intersubjective approval or agreement of expert judges must again be sought.	After getting a sense of the whole, the investigator then divides the protocol into meaning units by discriminating the different units that express key terms, aspects and behaviours that participants express in their descriptions
Flesh out the meaning of each significant statement, known as formulating meanings	Elimination of the elements that are not inherent in the phenomenon under investigation, or which represent a blending of the phenomenon with other phenomenon that most frequently accompany it	The next step is the transformation of the meaning units into a more precise structural expression using the formal language (of the investigator) within the field of study and with respect to the phenomenon under investigation. This is where free imaginative variation comes into play, and bearing in mind the situated context in which the phenomenon occurs.
Organise the formulated meanings into their main subject clusters (themes)	The hypothetical description of the phenomenon under investigation is drawn.	The final validating step is the general analysis (including post-structural analysis) in which the investigator has to make a general description of the phenomenon by integrating and synthesising the transformed meaning units from all the protocols in the study in order to show their commonalities.

Refer these thematic clusters back to the original protocols in order to validate them. Discrepancies may occur among and/or between the various clusters. Here investigators must not ignore data or themes that do not fit.	This hypothetical description is randomly applied to selected cases of sample. If necessary, a revision of the hypotheses can be undertaken, and the emergent hypotheses tested again on a new random sample of cases.	
The results of the above steps are then integrated into an exhaustive description of the phenomenon under investigation.	After successfully completing the above steps, the formerly hypothetical identification of the phenomenon under investigation may be considered a valid identification and description.	
Transform the exhaustive description of the phenomenon into an unequivocal statement of identification		
Final validation by returning to each protocol to verify findings.		



**Table 3.2**

**A Comparative summary of the characteristics of the Utrecht School and the Duquesne School of thought.**

<b>van Manen: (Utrecht School) Hermeneutic-Phenomenology</b>	<b>Amadeo Giorgi: (Duquesne School) Empirical Phenomenology</b>
Influenced by “human science pedagogy” and the Dutch movement of phenomenological research approach	Used insights from phenomenological philosophy to develop a human science approach to (psychology) phenomenological research
Key concepts include description, interpretation, phenomenological reduction, essences and intentionality	Key concepts include description, phenomenological reduction, free imaginative variation, search for essences, and intentionality.
Attempts to provide insights into human experience	Attempts to provide accurate descriptions of aspects of human experience/phenomenon
Focus is on the phenomenon under investigation	Focus is on the phenomenon under investigation
Outcome is usually a piece of narrative or writing which interprets the meaning of human experience or phenomenon and understanding the lived structures of meaning	Outcome is usually a general structural narrative/statement which describes the essential structures of the phenomenon being investigated

Source: Ehrich (1999)

### **3.7 Establishing the validity and the reliability of the current study**

Since **Giorgi's (1985a)** descriptive phenomenological research method guides the overall attitude of this study, it will be more useful to consider its validity and reliability from a descriptive phenomenological standpoint. However, before proceeding with such consideration, some background points must be borne in mind in order to provide a better frame of understanding. First, although **Giorgi's (1975a; 1985a)** descriptive phenomenological research method originates from the psychology discipline of the human sciences, the fundamental principles and the analytical procedures of his phenomenological research praxis cut across and remain relevant to

other fields of scientific research inquiry including the social sciences, management and organisational research.

Secondly, several writers (e.g. Berglund, 2007; Gibson & Hanes, 2003; Kupers, 1998; Giorgi, 2006b) from different disciplinary backgrounds have applied Giorgi's phenomenological research method in providing a better understanding of the essential meaning and structure of the management concepts and phenomena they investigated. Giorgi (1985a, p.6) comments regarding the general frame of his descriptive phenomenological research method: "there is enough generality to the method (as opposed to the specific procedures) so as to be applicable to a wide variety of phenomena." The descriptive phenomenological method employed for this study is therefore, relevant to the subfield of IM. Having clarified this point, I will focus on explicating the criteria for evaluating the validity and reliability of this study.

Commenting on the question of validity and reliability in descriptive phenomenological research, Giorgi (1988, p.169-172) observes that "modes of phenomenological thinking pose a difficulty for the logical-empirical understanding of validity and reliability", which makes the concepts seem "more remote than proximate." Implicit in Giorgi's view is the theory testing of quantitative scientific methodologies and instrumentation in which terms, such as, content validity, criterion validity and construct validity (See, Anatsi 1982; Cronbach, 1990)<sup>16</sup> are used to designate the validity of a quantitative study. However, quantitative researchers attempt to use one or all of the above concepts of validity to eliminate subjective

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<sup>16</sup> Content validity checks the relationship between the universality of a given idea from some defined content area, i.e. the whole validity concern is how well the researcher samples items appropriately in order to measure a supposedly universal idea. Criterion validity focuses attention on the direct and independent measure of what the test is designed to predict. Construct validity refers to the extent to which a test measures a theoretical construct or proposition, which is said to be realised by the "gradual accumulation of information from a variety of sources" (Anatsi, 1982, p. 151).

influences in order to arrive at an objective view of knowledge. Although arguably, subjective factors are hardly absent from such (quantitative) attempts, for example, theory testing. Theory testing is far from the major objective of this study. The major aim of this study is to explore how IM is experienced by practitioners in their world of practice, and thus, describe the invariant features that emerged to constitute the IM structure in its 'everydayness' from a phenomenological analysis of such practitioners' experiences.

Therefore, in contrast to the validity criteria employed in quantitative paradigms, **Giorgi (2002)** argues that phenomenological researchers seek the same 'objectivity' goal by clarifying the role of *intersubjectivity* when correct knowledge is attained by means of imaginative variation. He notes that not being able to remove subjectivity is one reason phenomenology is a philosophy of intuition. Within phenomenological research, the word intuition is a technical term meaning 'being present to consciousness'. Thus, the aim of descriptive phenomenology is to arrive at a structural understanding of specific and concrete phenomenon by crucially, being present to situations in which experiences of such phenomenon are rendered. The implicit view here clearly removes any sense of validity and reliability for descriptive phenomenological inquiry from the meaning being attributed to test construction as in quantitative study. Hence, employing concepts such as content validity, criterion validity and construct validity to typify or impose to account for the same objectivity criteria sought in this current study would be inappropriate.

However, although deploying such concepts may be unwarranted in descriptive phenomenological inquiry of this nature, it is useful to note that the use of such validation concepts may be relevant to mainstream management research in which measurement instruments e.g. structured questionnaires are employed in order to generate data that can be analysed using statistical processes. Polkinghorne (1989) concurs, and observes that in such cases, the question of objectivity has been specifically delimited to refer to confidence derived in the measuring instruments, although the problem might be – whether the researcher is accurately measuring what he or she claims to measure. In contrast, validity in descriptive phenomenological research, as Polkinghorne (1989) further adds, is viewed and approached from a very different perspective, in which the conclusion should inspire confidence because the argument in support of it has been persuasive.

However, given that not all arguments persuade with the same intensity, the degree of validity of the findings of descriptive phenomenological research then depends on the power of its presentation to convince the reader that its findings are accurate and consistent with the chosen research praxis. This entails capturing the essence of the phenomenon under investigation i.e. what constitutes the meaning of IM, and extracting rich data adequate in its explanation and analysis. In this sense, my task is to gain full access to the knowledge and meaning attributed to IM phenomenon by those practitioners implementing it in their organisations. According to Collis & Hussey (2003, p.59), when such access is attained in a phenomenological paradigm, “validity is high under such a paradigm.” Beyond gaining full access, as Polkinghorne (1989) observes, the researcher must persuade readers that the two types of inferences made in arriving at findings are strongly supported by: (a) the transformation of the

raw data into phenomenological and informed disciplinary expressions and, (b) the synthesis of the transformed meaning units into a general structural description. Such that the reader must be able to follow the analytical and thought processes that have led to the conclusions and accept them as valid. In other words, “Does the general structural description provide an accurate portrait of the common features and structural connections that are manifest in the [data] examples collected?”

(Polkinghorne, 1989, p.57). Therefore, the doubts to be considered include:

- Verifying whether the contents of the participants’ expressions have been influenced to the extent that such expressions do not truly reflect the participants’ actual experiences.
- Whether the transcription is accurate, and conveys the meaning of the oral presentation of the interview?
- In the analysis of the transcriptions, were there alternatives other than those offered by the investigator that could have been derived? Has the investigator identified these alternatives, demonstrated these alternatives and why they are less probable than the ones decided on?
- Is it possible to go from the general structural description to the transcriptions and to account for the specific contents and connections in the original examples of the (phenomenon) experience?
- Is the structural description situation-specific, or does it hold in general for the (phenomenon) experience in other situations?

Therefore, the grounds for making explicit and strong valid claims are based upon all of the above precautions i.e. phenomenological reduction and free imaginative variation taken in trying to arrive at an accurate essential description of the IM structure. Thus, as Giorgi (1988, p.173) summarises, “if the essential description truly captures the intuited essence, one has validity in a phenomenological sense. This means that one adequately describes the general sense that is given to the

consciousness of the researcher. If one can use this essential description consistently, one has reliability.” However, taken the above view literally ignores the fact that there may be the possibility of error occurring in a descriptive phenomenological research study. This can be demonstrated by showing that an empirical or free imaginative variation contradicts the researcher’s essential description, as “one can do all that [i.e. *phenomenological reduction and imaginative variation*] and still describe inaccurately” (Giorgi 1988, pp. 173-174). This is because there are no guarantees, only checks and balances, and essentially the checks and balance come using demonstrative procedures.

Therefore, the very idea of validity and reliability in this study should be understood from a descriptive phenomenological perspective within the context of the foregoing. Especially, with relevance to the IM elements constituting the IM structure that will emerge from my transformations achieved via reduction and free imaginative variation.

### **3.8 Summary**

This chapter has attempted to provide a detailed understanding of the main theoretical frame guiding the overall attitude of this study. It outlined the main philosophical principles of phenomenology as it transformed from its philosophical form into a qualitative research method. The chapter has also provided a commentary on qualitative research, which culminated into establishing the frame through which the ecological validity of this study should be evaluated and be better understood. The discussion now moves to the next chapter to explain this study’s method of execution as well as the systematic series of analytical steps applied.

## **Chapter Four**

### **Research Method of Study**

#### **4.0 Overview**

The previous chapter details my understanding of the background and the theoretical foundations guiding the phenomenological research approach employed for this study. This chapter lays out this study's methodological details as a whole, including a discussion of how and why I have chosen the praxis of descriptive phenomenology in executing the aim of this study. The chapter will also outline the justification of my sample size as well as the sampling process. The contributions of a pilot study to the main phenomenological study are also presented in this chapter. However, I will begin by first explaining the historical perspective on the utility of phenomenological research approach in IM research. This is necessary given the confusion that surrounds the field of phenomenology and its non-mainstream status as a research method in this field of study.

#### **4.1 Towards phenomenology in the domain field of IM**

A detailed review of the IM literature reveals that phenomenology has not yet established itself as a research paradigm within its sub-discipline. Perhaps, this is because of the hegemonic tradition of addressing most organisational and management studies from more conventional research paradigms. Research in IM seems to have established similar allegiance to such hegemonic tradition. Thereby, neglecting a range of other useful methods for its academic research activities.

Generally, studies (e.g. Berglund, 2007) employing the phenomenological research method in organisational and management research are limited in number. This is indicated by the complete absence of phenomenological research inquiry in IM domain as well as the near absence of phenomenological findings in various citations and references within mainstream organisational and management literature. However, a handful of studies (e.g. Das & Boje, 1993; Kupers, 1998; 2002; 2005; Goulding, 2005; Hackley & Tiwsakul, 2006; Butler & Murphy, 2007; Berglund, 2007) highlight the usefulness of phenomenology in conducting organisational and management research. Such studies stress that phenomenology is well suited for theory development within the broader field of management research.

Primarily, they identify that phenomenology may well “be the next step in the development of qualitative research with marketing” (Goulding 2005, p.304). Kupers (1998; 2002) employs phenomenological analysis to explain the embodied dimension of emotions and employee motivation as part of organisational life and culture. More importantly, there are a number of management studies (e.g. Sanders, 1982; Gibson & Hanes, 2003; Ehrich, 2005), which are not tackled strictly from a phenomenological research perspective, but which urge organisational and management researchers to consider phenomenological analysis as a way of providing a better understanding of organisational and management concepts in academic research activity.

Despite the absolute lack of a phenomenological based study in the subfield of IM, this study hopes to make phenomenology more accessible, and in turn, an attractive research methodology in this field of study. Of relevance to this aim is Ehrich (2005), who urges management researchers to consider the phenomenological research



method as a more accessible and useful approach to providing a better understanding of management terms and concepts. Directly related to the vision of this study, however, is [Kupers \(1998\)](#). Kupers notes that in undertaking a holistic research of organisational and management nature, the phenomenological research approach promises the methodological framework upon which to build the groundwork for more rigorous theory building and empirical testing. With such a focus on the subfield of IM, this study employs descriptive phenomenology in attempting to address the current gap in the domain field of IM research. Specifically, [Ahmed & Rafiq \(2003\)](#) imply that the lack of study with a clear IM mandate has resulted in competing alternatives, which in turn, has led to a multiplicity of understanding and ambiguity in this domain field of study.

Against this backdrop, I will explain in the next section how I have made descriptive phenomenology my research approach in an attempt to progress the focus of debate in this domain field of study. First, I will highlight the outcomes of management and organisational studies that advocate a phenomenological mode of inquiry as alternative research paradigms into organisational and management research. This is necessary in order to put into perspective why and how I have utilised qualitative descriptive phenomenology in addressing this study's aim. However, since this is the first attempt at conducting a phenomenological based study in IM domain field, only the studies that emphasise the relevance and usefulness of phenomenological analysis in organisational and management research are to be discussed.

#### **4.1.1 Phenomenology in organisational and management research**

Only a handful of management studies (e.g. Sanders, 1982; Ehrich, 2005; Gibson & Hanes, 2003) of non-phenomenological nature emphasize that phenomenological research method has much to offer in management and organisational research. Such studies address issues that relate to the broad discipline of research in management and organisational studies. Specifically, they highlight the usefulness and relevance of phenomenology in exploring a range of human management activity and experiences within organisations. Studies by Sanders (1982), Ehrich (2005) and Gibson & Hanes (2003) are at the forefront of such a research agenda. These studies generally highlight the need to explore alternative research paradigms in management research activities. Although Ehrich's (2005) and Gibson & Hanes's (2003) attempt at presenting phenomenology as a new way of viewing management and organisational research is not directly related or focused on IM research, the reflections and the questions they pose however underlie many of the fundamental issues facing academic research in IM. One such issue is the absence of a consensus regarding meaning and structure.

Ehrich (2005) for instance, explores the possibilities and benefits of using phenomenological research methods in management research. She argues that management is a highly complex interpersonal phenomenon that is very much concerned with the development of the human side of the enterprise. Her study posits that phenomenological methodology is useful in exploring and illuminating the meanings of a wide range of human activities and management concepts present in the organisation. Although none of the dimensions of IM is specifically evident in her study, she regrets that phenomenology as a qualitative research approach has not been given much attention in the discipline of management research. Therefore, in urging

management researchers to consider alternative research paradigms, she emphasizes that phenomenology is a qualitative research mechanism, which provides the direction towards understanding management phenomena given that “management is a process and practice that has a strong human dimension” (Ehrich, 2005, pp. 8-9). Her views are pertinent. They highlight the need to consider phenomenology as appropriate research approach to revealing new insights in management research as well as exploring a range of management concepts.

Gibson & Hanes (2003, p.200) emphasize that “phenomenology is well suited to...provide the basis for exploring new avenues and building new theory” in the field of human resource development (HRD). Their study provide critical reflections to help organisational researchers as it highlights the fact that phenomenology’s unique emphasis on ‘meanings’ and ‘essences’ can be useful in gaining a deeper insight into complex issues like definition of management terms and organisational constructs. The above views are of relevance to the issues facing academic research in IM, and reflect this study’s focus. In highlighting the relevance of phenomenology to organisational research, Gibson & Hanes (2003) specifically outline a number of complex organisational constructs in the field of HRD, such as, leadership, performance, and change management, which organisational researchers could explore from a phenomenological analysis. They emphasise that academic researchers who are keen on applying their knowledge to organisational interventions as well as committed to understanding a phenomenon through multidisciplinary lenses can find conducting phenomenological research relevant and useful.

Similarly, Sanders (1982) demonstrates the relevance of phenomenology as a research method by highlighting a number of significant implications it has for organisational research. Firstly, the study emphasizes that “phenomenology does not present a new view of observable data. Rather, it presents a “new way” of viewing what is genuinely discoverable and potentially there but often is not seen” (Sanders, 1982, p.357). In comparing phenomenology with scientific/normative paradigms, the above-mentioned studies argue that both are empirical and rooted in phenomenal experiences, but differ in how they observe and make inferences. However, Sanders’s views are particularly intended to stimulate organisational researchers to consider using phenomenological analysis to reveal the deeper structures of organisational constructs. Such views resonate with the specific aim of this study, as they buttress the fact that phenomenology has positive implications for unravelling ‘meanings’ in organisational research in that certain types of phenomena elude quantification and statistical inferences at some stage. This implies, as Sanders (1982, p.358) observes, that “phenomenological analysis” can be an “answer” to a “methodological void” in management and organisational research.

This section has summarised the historical perspective on the usefulness and appropriateness of phenomenology as a mode of inquiry by drawing insights from studies advocating the use of phenomenology in research inquiry into organisational and management concepts. It specifically highlights the appropriateness of using phenomenology as a research method through which to understand the deeper meanings and structures of any human management phenomena, such as, IM. In the next section, I shall attempt to articulate my personal journey towards adopting

descriptive phenomenology, and my subsequent decision to utilize its principles in seeking ways of addressing this study's aim.

#### **4.2 The rationale for the utility of phenomenology in this study**

As a former marketing manager of an investment bank, I have always had an interest in marketing topics, especially, those that relate to employee and customer relationships management. Therefore, my decision to acquire a post-graduate award in Business Management was informed by my desire to become more conversant with the different theoretical ideas and frameworks related to the above-mentioned topics. However, during my post-graduate study at the University the concept of internal service quality (ISQ), which deals mainly with employee and customer satisfaction captured my interest. Hence, I decided to investigate the ISQ concept and its impact on Customer Orientation (CO) during my Masters dissertation.

Following an in-depth postal survey via a quantitative study, I attempted to operationalise a model of ISQ construct labelled Internal Customer Orientation (ICO) from a sample of 280 bank employees. As part of this study, I undertook an extensive critical review of the IM literature. This was because some of the key variables e.g. employee empowerment and employee job satisfaction, which I had adopted in operationalising my ISQ construct were related to the IM literature. This initiated my interaction with the academic debates taking place within IM, and subsequently led to my decision to examine IM as a domain field of study at a doctorate level.

Because of the experience that I had gained from undertaking a quantitative study at my Masters level, my initial thought was to execute this study using the quantitative research approach. However, one fundamental factor altered such a course. As seen from my critical review of the existing IM literature in chapter two, past quantitative IM studies (e.g. Ahmed *et al.*, 2003; Lings, 2004; Gounaris, 2006; 2008) show mixed results, plus wide variety of competing theoretical interventions. This meant that using the quantitative approach would further add to, if not compound, the basic problem and gap that I had found after my detailed review of the IM literature. I found that there was no clear understanding of what IM means, as the previous conceptual works were confusing and had problems of definition and meaning. Mainly this was so because they simply moved from preconceived theories to empirical quantitative verification.

For this reason, it was of fundamental importance that I started from the very beginning. This led me to focus on making choice as to the appropriate research approach that would address the problem that I had identified. After a careful reflection, I considered the qualitative research approach. Before this, I had no idea of qualitative research methods. This entailed my extensive reading and understanding of the different paradigms within the qualitative research tradition. However, unlike my experience with quantitative research, I was dismayed to discover the different levels of discourse and different taxonomies within qualitative research approach. After further reading, I became aware of phenomenology as a qualitative research approach with its aim to explicate meanings and structure from experience.

Nevertheless, my in-depth reading of the phenomenology literature left me rather disappointed, as it was mainly an exercise in untangling the cross-paradigmatic interpretations of phenomenology, often, to the detriment of my understanding and decision. To appreciate my disappointment, imagine my realisation that phenomenology as a research method was alien to the field of IM. Even though I discovered that the phenomenological research approach contains a strong empirical component in itself. I became a little disconcerted. At this point, I turned to my supervisory team who signalled that phenomenology could be utilised as a research approach in the social sciences depending on the research aims and questions.

To be sure, I contacted via email Dr Lisa Ehrich of School of Learning and Professional Studies, Queensland University of Technology, Brisbane, Australia. I had earlier come across Lisa's two papers titled – "Untangling the threads and coils of the web of phenomenology" and "Revisiting phenomenology: Its potential for management research." Both papers were published in *Education Research and Perspectives* and the *British Academy of Management* conference proceedings respectively. Lisa affirmed the views of my supervisors but cautioned that phenomenology has yet to be used extensively in management research. In addition, she suggested that I should start by reading the works of Donald Polkinghorne and Amedeo Giorgi in its "pure form" in order to grasp the fundamental ideas about how to conduct phenomenological research because of its unique and complex nature.

After much reading, the question then arose as to which interpretation or variant of phenomenology best lends itself to addressing the problem that I had identified from reviewing the IM literature. I identified that there was no study exploring how IM is

experienced in the world of practice. However, from my reading of the phenomenology literature, I realised that Edmund Husserl - a German philosopher, was widely credited and recognised as the founder of modern phenomenology. Therefore, I began to consider those phenomenological philosophies that base their legitimation in Edmund Husserl's views. That entailed making choice as to the variant of phenomenology most appropriate to addressing the focus of my investigation. I realised that descriptive phenomenology harmonised well with addressing this study's focus. I began to familiarise myself with the descriptive phenomenological research approach and its usefulness as a qualitative research method. But also, I realised that choosing this variant of phenomenology was not going to be easy to do on my own merely by reading. Hence, a more pragmatic and comprehensive exposure to it was called for.

Therefore, I decided to contact Amedeo Giorgi via email. This was because the numerous key phenomenology literatures (e.g. Polkinghorne, 1989; Sokolowski, 2000) that I had read frequently cited Giorgi's works and credited him with devising descriptive phenomenology and modifying its praxis to suit mainstream qualitative research method. Amedeo responded, and subsequently engaged in series of discussions with me relating to my study. This was in an effort to enlighten me further about the method of conducting descriptive phenomenological research. This led to my developing a mutual interest and a professional relationship, which culminated eventually in my having an unhindered access to his manuscripts on descriptive phenomenology. Such a privilege was indeed useful. It helped to enrich my understanding of the theory, usefulness, application, and the difficulties associated with descriptive phenomenology as a qualitative research method. It was at this



uncture, and after much reading, reflection, questioning, and probing, that I began to sense a way out. Hence, it would be fair to acknowledge that Amedeo Giorgi's tutelage was crucial to my adoption of the principles of descriptive phenomenology.

To appreciate my confidence in the usefulness of descriptive phenomenology, I presented a paper in Washington D.C in August 2007 at a Doctoral Colloquium during the 23<sup>rd</sup> All Educators' Summer Conference organised by the American Marketing Association (AMA). In my paper, I argued that phenomenological research approach suitably lends itself as a useful mechanism through which to explicate the meaning and the structure of management phenomenon, such as, IM. The event at the AMA conference, which was my first attendance at a major international conference, was a turning-point moment. Not least the fact I had the rare opportunity to have shared my ideas with some of the eminent scholars e.g. David Polkinghorne, Don Schultz, whose works on IM and phenomenology respectively I had read. More importantly, I got inspiration from verbal feedback that I had received during my informal chat with these individuals. By this, I mean my suggestion that academic researchers in IM domain must begin to recognise alternative patterns of seeking knowledge through dialogue with other established research approaches, such as, phenomenology.

On my part, I have focused on descriptive phenomenological methods rather than interpretative ones. This was because from extensive reading I realised that descriptive phenomenological method could be applied whenever human experience was the point of departure. Thus, if managers have experienced the IM phenomenon, then the method indeed could be used to explore the nature of such experience. This entailed going to the first step of clarification, before examining, and then establishing the

nature of the IM experience that such managers have had. This is what I have attempted to do precisely in this study in adopting the descriptive phenomenological research paradigm. The challenge for me in attempting to do so was threefold. 1) The problem of access and my sampling size. 2) To bracket (*epoche*) personal past knowledge and all other intuitions about my theoretical knowledge of IM, regardless of the sources, so that full attention could be given to the instance of IM phenomenon that would appear to my consciousness. 3) During my fieldwork, to take IM as a phenomenon that was appearing or presenting itself to me without making any claim that it really existed in the manner in which it was presented to me.

In order to tackle my first challenge, I discussed the issue of access and sample size with Amedeo Giorgi. He specifically advised, as he has exemplified in his numerous published works, that I could exploit my personal contacts to gain access to a handful of between five and ten participants. In his view, as evidenced in the phenomenology literature (see, for example, Polkinghorne, 1989), such a range has always been enough to bring about emergent possibilities in any descriptive phenomenological research inquiry. The main issue was with getting individuals that had experienced the object of investigation, and making sure that such individuals were able to articulate their experience. This implied that my choice of descriptive phenomenology ensured the explication of themes, meanings and essence of IM from the views and experiences of the individuals sampled in this study about their understanding of the essence of IM.

Overall, I chose qualitative descriptive phenomenology because I considered it most appropriate to addressing the research aim of this study as well as examining the practitioners' experiences of IM. This stems from my philosophical stance that there is no objective scientific truth other than the experience of the individual. One cannot divorce the truth of what a thing is from the way it is experienced. In other words, one cannot make judgements of truth or objectivity without experiencing it, and with that also comes the subjective view of truth and/or knowledge. Therefore, truth is subjective and is arrived at through the experience of a phenomenon. I learnt a lot about qualitative cum descriptive phenomenological research praxis and its importance in providing me with a more in-depth understanding of the precise nature of the problem facing academic research in the domain field of IM.

In other words, the descriptive phenomenological approach as applied in this study was appropriate to addressing the gap that I had identified from reviewing the IM literature. The outcomes from a descriptive phenomenological research approach were considered to be potentially of great benefit, in that the emergent experiential IM themes and their underlying essences served to corroborate, repudiate, complement, and in some cases, extend existing research outcomes in the domain field of this study. Interestingly, though, since the method only requires accessing a handful of individuals that have experienced the IM phenomenon, it was easy for me to sample a manageable number of individuals involved with IM implementation in their organisations. These individuals work in different organisations that I had discovered to practice IM following much reading and research. The subsequent sections detail my sampling procedure including the issue of access to this selected sample.

### 4.3 The Sampling Process

Before presenting the details of my sampling process including how I gained access to the participants, I shall further justify why I have chosen only a small number of participants for this study. Apart from Amedeo Giorgi's recommendations as mentioned above, the sample size required for phenomenological based studies generally varies considerably. On the one hand, for instance, phenomenological researchers (e.g. van Kaam, 1964) have employed more than three hundred participants to conduct their analysis. Yet, on the other hand, some scholars (e.g. Colaizzi, 1978; Berglund 2007; Polkinghorne, 1989; Sanders, 1982) have used between one and fifteen participants to provide an understanding of the nature of an investigated phenomenon. This means that either one or more than one participant is considered adequate in providing sufficient data to develop emergent possibilities of experiences in order to understand the particular features of a phenomenon in a phenomenological research inquiry.

However, the crucial point to note is that a representative statistical sample, as in quantitative research approaches, is not a major focus of concern in phenomenological research study. The key issue is with the researcher's ability to secure a manageable and relevant group or an individual for whom the object of investigation was salient. In line with my sampling process, Giorgi, (1985a) and Polkinghorne (1989) identify that this entails getting one or any number of informed individuals who have had IM experience or who have good knowledge of IM. Specifically, Giorgi remarks regarding the issue of sample size in a descriptive phenomenological research inquiry:

One would rarely conduct research of this type with only one subject. It is important to realize this because it is most difficult to write an essential general structure with only one instance. The more subjects there are, the greater the variations, and hence the better the ability to see what is essential (Giorgi, 1985a, p.19).

With the above point established, I will detail in the next section how I gained access to my sample.

#### **4.3.1 Access to participants**

Since the aim of this study is to explore how IM is experienced in practice, the key issue was with gaining access to the relevant sample. Given that the focus was on individual experiences rather than the organisation, it was easy for me to gain access to a number of employees who experience IM from organisations implementing the IM concept. Such organisations were determined based on my knowledge and understanding that IM was part of their overall corporate strategy. Access to the relevant employees was facilitated through a combination of direct personal contacts and referrals. Essentially, I contacted a former colleague whom I had worked with in a major UK retail bank who agreed to participate in this study. This particular contact then negotiated access to two of his other colleagues based at different branches who equally consented to take part in this study. Their interests in participating in this study were particularly borne out of the fact that IM was an organisational initiative that they had all been involved in at their various places of work.

Having been a customer of HSBC bank for over four years, it was possible for me to negotiate access to one of the senior managers of the bank through my local branch manager. The senior manager was keen to share her IM experiences given the fact that

she was involved in organising and championing various IM awareness campaigns. HSBC adopts IM as part of its wider strategy on customer service improvement. Access to the two participants from the City Council, i.e. public sector firms, was possible because one of the participants had previously participated in my pilot study and had requested to be kept informed about the progress and development of this study. However, it is worth mentioning that at the time of the pilot study, she was working for a private marketing consultancy firm based at Birmingham, UK, before moving to Wolverhampton City Council (WCC). The marketing consultancy firm she had worked for incorporates IM programmes as part of their overall business solution strategies. Therefore, before joining WCC's marketing and tourism department, she had been involved in IM initiatives from practice as a Marketing Executive in the above-mentioned Marketing firm as well as by attending a professional marketing course at the University.

Through a referral by a personal contact who works in the London Corporate Development office of Nokia Corporation, I secured access to the participant who works with Nokia. As a mobile-communication and engineering company, Nokia uses IM strategy. Finally, through a colleague who co-ordinates the CIM programme in a University, it was easy for me to gain access to the last participant who is the UK sales manager of a manufacturing firm based at Shropshire, UK. This manufacturing company adopts IM strategy as a way of improving their customer service experience. This particular participant was first exposed to IM during his MBA programme at the University before subsequently introducing the idea in his organisation. Overall, the method of participants' selection is consistent with [Giorgi \(1975; 1985a\)](#) who suggests

that phenomenological researchers may secure access to their participants through personal contacts and/or acquaintances.

#### **4.3.2 Participants' selection and technique**

The selection of participants commenced immediately after I received the approval from my school's research ethics committee. A purposive sampling of eight participants coded as P(x), where x ranges from 1 to 8 was selected for this study. Purposive sampling is generally common in qualitative research inquiry. It entails selecting participants based on their specific knowledge and/or experience of the topic under investigation (See, Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Morse, 1991; Saunders *et al.*, 2007). As the primary concern of this study was with describing the meaning and establishing the structure of IM from the experiences of individuals who are implementing IM in their organisation, the critical aspects in participant selection were informed by certain criteria. Firstly, whether the individual has had adequate knowledge and experience of IM, and secondly, whether such individual was able to provide rich descriptions of such experience.

Polkinghorne (1989) notes that selection of participants for a descriptive phenomenological study is based on whether subjects chosen are to function as informants by providing in-depth descriptions of their experiences regarding the phenomenon under investigation. The method of participants' selection was also consistent with the aim of phenomenological based requirement of selecting participants based on their knowledge and experience of the phenomenon under investigation, as Giorgi (1985a) recommends. Therefore, the individuals selected to participate in this study were practitioners who were involved in and regularly

experience an instance of IM in their everyday working lives. The selected participants constitute informed employees from a diverse range of private and public sector businesses spanning senior management to lower-level strata. They were selected specifically from the financial services sector, mobile-telecommunications and engineering management, the manufacturing sector, and one Local Government Council. These business sectors are all based in the United Kingdom. The decision to focus on such diverse practitioners was based on the need to have a broad understanding of what IM means to practitioners across different sectors of the business community.

Apart from sampling participants from such diverse organisational backgrounds as a means of accessing the experiences of IM phenomenon, this study is the first phenomenological attempt at introducing practitioner 'voice' in IM research. Therefore, the sampling of participants from diverse business sectors allowed a more general conclusion to be drawn in terms of the phenomenological analysis of IM themes and structures given that the selected participants brought with them a rich variety of specific and nuanced instances of IM. However, the basis for generalizability in phenomenological findings, as Polkinghorne (1989) notes, is not one of population characteristics but the specificity of the essential descriptions relevant to the phenomenon under investigation.

In other words, as Giorgi (2006) remarks, so long as the researcher can employ '*eidetic reduction*', i.e. remove what is perceived in the object of investigation and leave what is essential with the help of imaginative variation, then the essential meaning, i.e. '*eidetic intuition*', can be obtained as the structure of the phenomenon



and be described as an essential finding that is intrinsically general. Tables 4.1a to 4.1h below show the justification for each participant's inclusion in this study including a brief summary of their prior knowledge and involvement with IM, and how access was gained to each of them.

**Table 4.1: Characteristics of each participant for the main study**

**4.1a: Characteristics of P1**

<b>Gender:</b>	Male
<b>Age:</b>	32
<b>Sector:</b>	Manufacturing
<b>Organisation:</b>	XYZ International
<b>Position:</b>	Sales Manager, UK wide
<b>Justification for selection:</b>	Exposure and knowledge of IM through education and practice. Introduced the idea of IM to his company, and also co-ordinates IM initiatives from the headquarters of the company.
<b>Prior Knowledge of IM &amp; involvement:</b>	P1 was first exposed to IM in 2003 during his MBA programme at the University. He developed an interest in IM and subsequently introduced the idea to the directors of his company. The directors then mandated him to lead the IM campaign throughout the company as part of a wide-company initiative towards improving customer service relationship. Fully involved in the implementation of IM in his organisation through the co-ordination of a series of IM awareness programmes including ensuring compulsory training for all employees' designed to make them aware of IM initiatives that exist within the organisation. These trainings are usually organised and run with the help of a local consultancy firm.
<b>Access:</b>	Through referral. I first met P1 in the University when he was undergoing a professional course on Chartered Institute of Marketing (CIM) through a colleague who co-ordinates the programme.

**Table 4.1b: Characteristics of P2**

<b>Gender:</b>	Male
<b>Age:</b>	33
<b>Sector:</b>	Mobile Telecommunication & Engineering
<b>Organisation:</b>	Nokia Corporation, UK
<b>Position:</b>	System Engineer.
<b>Justification for selection:</b>	Exposure to IM through practice, as he is involved in IM implementation in his organisation.
<b>Prior IM Knowledge &amp; involvement:</b>	First exposed to IM in 2002 as an IT Marketing consultant in a bank based at Seattle, USA before joining Nokia. As a system engineer, P2 works as one of the many liaisons between Nokia Corporation and its corporate clients across the UK. He is based at clients' offices and sites across the UK most times, hence, his IM involvement is ensuring there is effective flow of communication and information dissemination between such clients and the employees across the company. Nokia is a mobile-communication company that adopts IM initiatives as part of their overall employee and customer retention strategy.
<b>Access:</b>	Accessed P2 through referral. I have a friend who works as a network engineer with Nokia Corporation, but because this friend was not directly involved with IM implementation, he arranged a meeting between me and his line manager who subsequently introduced and arranged my interview with P2.

**Table 4.1c: Characteristics of P3**

<b>Gender:</b>	Male
<b>Age:</b>	30
<b>Sector:</b>	Banking & Insurance
<b>Organisation:</b>	NATWEST Bank, UK
<b>Position:</b>	Customer Service Advisor
<b>Justification for selection:</b>	Exposure to IM through practice, as he is involved in IM implementation in his organisation.
<b>Prior IM Knowledge &amp; involvement:</b>	First exposed to IM in 2004 when I both worked as marketing & sales executives for Birmingham Midshires, part of Halifax & Bank of Scotland (HBOS). He later joined NATWEST in 2005, and continued to be involved in the implementation of IM strategy at his local branch in his role as a customer service advisor. As a frontline service officer, P3 is directly involved in promoting employee empowerment and training campaigns as part of his branch's IM initiatives towards excellent customer service delivery.
<b>Access:</b>	My personal contact and a former colleague. I first met P3 in September 2004 during a two-month training course for new hires organised by Birmingham Midshires, as part of my induction during a management trainee course.

**Table 4.1d: Characteristics of P4**

<b>Gender:</b>	Male
<b>Age:</b>	25
<b>Sector:</b>	Public Sector Tourism
<b>Organisation:</b>	Wolverhampton City Council
<b>Position:</b>	Development Officer
<b>Justification for selection:</b>	Exposure to IM through practice.
<b>Prior IM Knowledge &amp; involvement:</b>	First exposed to IM in 2005 in Wolverhampton City Council following the re-structuring of the Council's Marketing and Tourism department. The restructuring was aimed at making the Council more customer focused. P4 is directly involved in the implementation of IM programmes e.g. internal communication across the Council in his role as the development officer within the tourism department. He organises social and recreational activities, such as, entertainment fairs, in conjunction with outside agencies within the Wolverhampton Borough.
<b>Access:</b>	Accessed P4 through referral. P5 arranged my interview with P4 because they both work as colleagues.

**Table 4.1e: Characteristics of P5**

<b>Gender:</b>	Female
<b>Age:</b>	26
<b>Sector:</b>	Public Sector Marketing
<b>Organisation:</b>	Wolverhampton City Council
<b>Position:</b>	Project Officer
<b>Justification for selection:</b>	Exposure to IM through education and practice, and involved in IM implementation in her organisation.
<b>Prior IM Knowledge &amp; involvement:</b>	First exposed to IM as a Marketing Executive Advisor in 2004 in Clarion Events Ltd, a private marketing consultancy firm based at the NEC, Birmingham, UK. She was also exposed to IM during her professional course on CIM at the University before joining the Events & Marketing department of Wolverhampton City Council in 2006. P5 is directly involved in the implementation of IM e.g. internal communication across the Council in her role as the project officer in charge of co-ordinating and disseminating upcoming social events, such as, concerts usually organised and funded by the Council.
<b>Access:</b>	I first met P5 during my pilot study, hence, it was easy to contact her for an interview for my main study.

**Table 4.1f: Characteristics of P6**

<b>Gender:</b>	Female
<b>Age:</b>	29
<b>Sector:</b>	Banking & Insurance
<b>Organisation:</b>	NATWEST Bank, UK
<b>Position:</b>	Customer Service Advisor
<b>Justification for selection:</b>	Exposure to IM through training and practice
<b>Prior IM Knowledge &amp; involvement:</b>	First exposed to IM in 2004 in NATWEST after she was promoted to a sales advisory role. She joined NATWEST as a cashier in 2003. She is directly involved in the implementation of IM in her local branch in her role as a customer service advisor. She has also undergone various in-house and external trainings to increase her awareness and understanding of IM programmes.
<b>Access:</b>	Through referral. P3 arranged my interview with P6 because she was his colleague based at a different branch.

**Table 4.1g: Characteristics of P7**

<b>Gender:</b>	Female
<b>Age:</b>	35
<b>Sector:</b>	Banking & Insurance
<b>Organisation:</b>	NATWEST Bank, UK
<b>Position:</b>	Senior Customer Service Advisor
<b>Justification for selection:</b>	Exposure to IM through training and practice, and involved in IM implementation and co-ordination.  First exposed to IM in 2004 in NATWEST after she joined from Barclays Bank where she worked as a Sales Advisor. She joined NATWEST as a Customer Service Advisor, where she is directly involved in the implementation of IM in the branch because of her role as a Senior Customer Service Advisor. She has also undergone various in-house and external trainings intended to increase her awareness and understanding of IM.
<b>Prior IM Knowledge &amp; involvement:</b>	
<b>Access:</b>	Through referral. Again, P3 arranged my interview with P7 because she is his line manager.

**Table 4.1h: Characteristics of P8**

<b>Gender:</b>	Female
<b>Age:</b>	45
<b>Sector:</b>	Banking & Insurance
<b>Organisation:</b>	HSBC Bank, UK
<b>Position:</b>	Senior Manager
<b>Justification for selection:</b>	Exposure to IM through education, training and practice
<b>Prior IM Knowledge &amp; involvement:</b>	First exposed to IM in 2002 during her MBA at the University. Since then, she has undertaken numerous trainings involving IM implementation strategy organised by different consultancy firms. She has also organised in-house trainings for HSBC managers and customer-facing employees across different branches of the bank here in UK. She is currently HSBC's campaign co-ordinator for Customer First Initiative. She liaises with regional branches across the West Midlands in their IM campaign and implementation efforts.
<b>Access:</b>	Through referral. As a customer of HSBC, my local branch manager negotiated access to P8 by arranging a meeting between me and P8 to discuss my research given the topic and my focus of investigation.

#### **4.4 The data collection process**

The data collection process provided the opportunity for me to learn about various instances of IM experience in different organisational contexts across the different sectors of the business community. Data was collected through face-to-face open-ended interviews. This method of data collection is widely recommended and frequently applied in descriptive phenomenological research inquiry (see, for example, Polkinghorne, 1989; Giorgi & Giorgi, 2003). The data collection period spans April 2007 to August 2007. The data collected was audio taped and later transcribed by myself prior to analysis, as Giorgi (1985a) recommends. The transcription of the data was verbatim. This means that the possible errors in grammar, e.g. hiatus and informal expressions that may be occurring in the transcribed data, are inherent in the original data and not mine. The qualitative process of including

microcues of hesitation and pacing that demonstrates cognition was excluded in the transcribed interview text. However, such exclusion did not affect the credibility of the transformations or the structure of the IM phenomenon that eventually emerged. All data were collected in the participants' natural work settings i.e. their offices and their customers' site.

The focus of the data collection was on the specific situations and action sequences of IM as the participants described their experiences. In other words, the data collection process was theme-oriented rather than person-oriented. During the data collection process, I attempted to establish rapport with the participants through affirmative responses and congruent body language. The consequence was the fact that the participants easily established a mutual interest regarding my focus of investigation. **Smith (1995)** recognises establishing such rapport as one of the key features of qualitative-phenomenological interviewing technique. I applied the principle of data saturation when it became clear and evident that subsequent interview sessions neither produced nor revealed any new insights into IM experience different from the data already generated. **Parse *et al.*, (1985)** note that samples of between two and ten participants in a phenomenological study is adequate to yield data redundancy and saturation, which means that no new themes or essences would emerge in subsequent data.

#### **4.5 The interview process**

The interview questions designed for this study provided the opportunity for my interpersonal engagement with the selected participants. As such, an open-ended interviewing technique was applied during my interview with participants. This meant

that questions put to the participants were not anchored on any scale or instrument, as the primary focus was with gathering participants' 'rich' phenomenological descriptions of their IM experience, rather than with measuring responses regarding the nature of such experiences. The use of open-ended interviews therefore aided this process, as the nature of such questions encouraged participants to provide freely rich descriptions regarding their experiences of IM. This meant that participants were able to introduce themes that were unanticipated by me.

Thus, the questions used for this study did not progress in any particular uniformity, but sometimes developed along specific frame as directed by each participant's responses. Several qualitative research scholars (e.g. Kvale, 1996; Smith, 1983; Smith, 1995; Saunders *et al.*, 2007) identify that the ordering of questions in open-ended and semi-structured interview is less relevant, as the interviewing can move towards probing more interesting areas as they emerge, which could contribute to the richness of data. This meant that I asked some participants fewer questions depending on the specific nature and the depth of responses such participants provided on occasion. Thus, the first general interview question guiding the current study took the form:

*“Can you think of what happens in a typical day in your organisation, specifically, in as much detail as possible how would you describe a situation in which internal marketing has occurred for you”?*

The nature of the above question encouraged each participant to describe his or her experiences of IM as freely and as richly as possible. The second question was affirmative and aimed at gathering more specific responses from the participants regarding the instances of IM from their rich experiential accounts. Thus, the following question: *“What part of that experience would you consider internal*

*marketing*”? was put to participants in order to encourage them to concentrate on the focus of my investigation. My intention was to seek clarification and to ascertain what part of the expressions in response to the first question participants specifically recognise as constituting an instance of IM experience.

Although most participants appeared to have either summarised or repeated in large part what they had referred to in the first question, this second question was particularly useful in two ways. First, new insights sometimes emerged by way of illustration/exemplification given that some participants often displayed ambiguity in their original expressions. Secondly, the second question helped in redirecting their focus on the topic of investigation. This meant that the nature of my probing sometimes involved direct questioning of participants in order to obtain a more specific frame of response.

Following such direct questioning was an alternative phrasing of the question in which the aim was to seek further explanations and clarify ambiguities. This was because participants frequently misinterpreted the experiential aspect of IM with the notion of internal communication. Thus, the question, “*Are you then saying internal marketing is what*”? was sometimes put to participants in order to obtain a more specific frame of response relating to their given experiential accounts of IM. My primary aim for rephrasing the question was to further clarify and delineate instances of IM from the participants’ expressions so that the essence of IM that was emerging would become clearer and unambiguous.



Kvale (1996) identifies that when statements of interviewees are ambiguous, it is the responsibility of the researcher or the interviewer to seek clarifications. Such ambiguities and misinterpretations therefore, could be understood as methodological constraints. The presence of such ambiguities and misinterpretation resonate with Schultz's (2006), who remarks that practitioners often misunderstood IM as trying to sell something to employees. However, as Giorgi (1992) emphasizes, seeking such clarification is consistent with descriptive phenomenological emphasis on looking for essences, i.e. the essential features of a phenomenon. Each of the phenomenological interviews lasted on an average for about fifty minutes, and were retained for analysis.

#### **4.6 Pilot study**

Before the main interview exercise, I conducted preliminary interviews with six practitioners with marketing and human resource management backgrounds in the manner of a pilot study. The purpose was to ascertain the nuances of IM practices and perceptions in organisations, as well as with a view in mind as to how best to phrase the main interview questions in order to generate the most significant experiential account of IM. Pilot testing helps in refining interview protocols so that participants will have no difficulties in answering the questions, and given the fact that the responses from a pilot study will provide me with “an idea of the reliability and suitability of the questions” for the main study, as Saunders *et al.*, (2007, p.387) identify.

With this in mind, the pilot study served as my first attempt to ascertain whether as well as gauge the extent to which IM was practised in organisations, who practised it e.g. types of managers and people coming across IM, and assess in a formative

manner how the group of people who practice IM articulated it in organisations. Participants in the pilot study were selected from middle-level managers at various stages of completing their courses on Chartered Institute of Marketing (CIM) and Chartered Institute of Personnel Development (CIPD) at the University. They worked in various private and public sector companies including banks, construction management, transportation, manufacturing, Local (Government) Councils and telecommunications. Access to the participants was secured through the University colleagues that coordinated the CIM and CIPD programmes. I obtained the participants' consent after formal meetings with each of them highlighting the purpose of the pilot study.

However, in keeping with this study's overall aim, I specified two criteria for participants' selection for the pilot study. First, to qualify as a sample, a participant must have been employed and actively working for at least two years in any of the two key areas mentioned - marketing or human resources management. Second, participants would have been in their current position for at least a minimum of twelve-months as at the time of selection, and would have been working for the named organisation continuously for at least two years. This was to ensure that only actual perceptions and reflections on IM activities in organisations were obtained from participants rather than conjectures. Overall, a total number of six participants qualified for selection. I informed them that they were participating in a pilot study, and that I could make available to them the findings of both the pilot study and the final research if they requested.

Although the results of the pilot study interviews were not systematically analysed according to descriptive phenomenological method, the pilot served to highlight that IM was gaining ground amongst practitioners. The findings<sup>17</sup> (see footnote) from the pilot study indicated that IM was not only infused into corporate practices at varying levels of maturity, but that it was increasingly becoming important and acceptable to all types of organisations in both the private and the public sector. The participants expressed the view that IM enhances internal exchange of communication, and therefore, should be considered a ‘high priority’ in strategic management thinking.

There was also a perception amongst the participants that if top-level managers and directors understood the essence of IM phenomenon and gave it the required level of managerial support, then possibly, it could attract a heightened level of interest from everyone in the organisation. The participants also shared the view that IM could be beneficial to both the employee and the organisation, since through internal employee survey, both parties can understand their mutual expectations and work towards achieving the same corporate goals. The participants however, identified that IM suffers from negative overtones carried over from the general notion of marketing, which meant that employees could sometimes view IM as a ‘bribery technique’ or ‘management tool’.

The pilot study was particularly significant in highlighting that IM was a human management activity occurring in organisational life. Therefore, the findings from my pilot study were an additional impetus to the consideration that a phenomenological analysis will help to create a much better understanding of the meaning and the

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<sup>17</sup> Some of the disclosures contained under this section are part of an academic paper titled “Internal Marketing: focus on practice”, which is to be published in July 2009 in a peer-reviewed practitioner journal titled *International Journal of Management Practice*, Volume. 3, Issue 4.

structure of IM. Outcomes from the pilot study also contributed to the main interview process, which helped me to generate more effectively the experiential accounts of IM phenomenon. In particular, the outcomes from the pilot study served as a guideline and learning experience in my execution of the main study.

However, during the pilot study, I made the decision to avoid predefining the context of the main phenomenological study. This decision was in keeping with the descriptive phenomenological attitude in which any previous knowledge of the investigated phenomenon was to be suspended in order to describe exactly what was 'presented as presented'. Amongst the interview question for the pilot study was: *"Have you ever come across the term internal marketing either as an organisational practice or as an individual, how would you view the term internal marketing?"* Overall, the pilot study was suggestive of areas of convergence and divergence between the theory and practice of IM. The interviews for the pilot study were also audiotaped and transcribed, and they are available from me. See [Table 4.2](#) below for the characteristics of participants used for the pilot study. Although there were no ethical issues of importance, pseudonyms have been used to protect the identity of the individuals who have participated in the pilot testing.

**Table 4.2: Characteristics of participants for the pilot study**

Participant	Gender	Age	Position	Company	Sector
Kat	Female	27	Campaign Manager	Birmingham Midshires	Financial Services
Eva	Female	33	Product Manager	Tarmac Limited	Engineering Construction
Emer	Female	25	Marketing Executive Advisor	Clarion Events NEC Ltd.	Events Management
Melayne	Female	37	Human Resource Assistant	Stoke-on-Trent City Council	Local Government Administration
Simoa	Male	35	Human Resource Manager	Central Trains	Transportation (Rail)
Cheteam	Male	28	Human Resource Manager	Manpower Business Services	Communications

#### 4.7 Method of self-reflection

Following [Giorgi \(1985a\)](#) and prior to conducting the actual interviews, I adopted the phenomenological attitude by bracketing my past knowledge of the IM concept regardless of its sources in order to give full attention to the emerging IM phenomenon. In other words, I took the object of expression, i.e. IM, as a phenomenon that was appearing or presenting itself to me without any claim that it really existed in the way that it was appearing. In this sense, I withheld the positing of IM existence in order to remain within what [Giorgi \(2006b\)](#) refers to as ‘the confine of the phenomenal realm’. This entailed my abstaining from making any existential claim to the expressions of IM that were appearing.

After encountering the instance of IM phenomenon, I applied the process of free imaginative variation in order to discover the essential structures that remained invariant across protocols before carefully describing what I had discovered. Although the process of free imaginative variation added to the descriptive character of the phenomenological approach employed in this study, it was among the attitudinal phenomenological perspectives, as identified by [Husserl \(1983\)](#) in an attempt to make the phenomenological descriptions more rigorous.

However, since the participants' descriptions contained in this study were their original expressions, I modified such original expressions to the disciplinary language of IM as suggested by [Goirgi \(2006\)](#). Giorgi refers to this self-reflective process as 'disciplinary attitude', which requires the researcher to be sensitive to the discipline of the phenomenon under investigation. He cautions that if one only applied the above attitudinal phenomenological perspective, i.e. free imaginative variation, as recommended by Husserl more directly without modification to disciplinary expressions, one would be conducting philosophical analyses. Hence, it was necessary for me to adopt a disciplinary attitude within the context of the phenomenological attitude.

Thus, in adopting the disciplinary attitude, I was able to apply and/or become conscious of management and sometimes marketing terms in the phenomenological analysis of the study. In this sense, however, it is necessary to emphasize that whilst the phenomenological reduction was useful in helping me to suspend, i.e. bracket my theoretical biases and presuppositions regarding the IM phenomenon in order to be alert to its emerging or experiential aspects. Adopting the disciplinary attitude was

useful in alerting me to instances where my theoretical biases may have been inadvertently imposed on the data analysis. This meant that if the suspension of such theoretical biases and/or presuppositions was not fully achieved through the phenomenological attitude, it was possible to have significantly minimised if not eliminated them by adopting the disciplinary attitude.

I was also conscious of the fact that experiential errors could occur in phenomenological analysis. Hence, my adopting both the phenomenological and the disciplinary attitudes was essentially crucial in undertaking this study. Giorgi (2006) identified that the possibility of errors was possible if presentational evidence provokes association with theoretical biases pertaining to the phenomenon under investigation. Then the former is subsumed into the latter as identical, whereas they may only be similar as the differences between them could be significant. In order to guard against such experiential errors from occurring, a situation in which I observed a similarity between my *a priori* theoretical knowledge of IM and the participants' original expressions during the analysis, the interview transcript was referred to for further scrutiny. This iterative behaviour was necessary in order to ascertain if the characteristics or features of the emerging IM phenomenon were from the interview material itself or because of my imposition of personal biases.

Instances of such experiential errors, although largely infrequent, fully underwent such iterations. The reason was to avoid the ramifications of conflating good research design principles with my personal or theoretical biases. Instances where I felt that such errors might have occurred in my analysis of this study, if at all, were recognised and recorded for reference in the data analysis.

#### **4.8 Summary**

This chapter has attempted to articulate my personal journey in terms of why and how I adopted the descriptive phenomenology in addressing the focus of this study including the justification of the sample size and selection. It has also outlined in a table format the justification for participants's inclusion in this study, summary of their prior knowledge and involvement with IM and how access was gained to each participant. The chapter concluded by outlining how the outcomes from the pilot study has shaped the phenomenological process of the main study. The next chapter discusses the analysis of this study as a whole.



## **Chapter Five**

### **The Analysis of Study**

#### **5.0 Overview**

Whilst the previous chapter articulates the methods in the execution of this study, this chapter presents the steps taken to data analysis as well as the findings arising from the interviews. First, it is necessary to explain the process of this study's descriptive phenomenological analysis.

#### **5.1 The process of this study's descriptive phenomenological analysis**

Giorgi's (1985a) phenomenological analytical method was considered appropriate to executing this study's objective in the sense that the result from the analytical frame would enable me to describe the structure of IM as the participants presented it. This implies that the phenomenological reduction utilised in this study was at the scientific level different from the transcendental reduction at the philosophical level as articulated by Husserl (1963). In other words, this study took the view, as Giorgi (2006b) suggested, that the expressions of IM experiences presented here were reduced, but not the acts of consciousness with which they were correlated. That is, such expressions have been taken exactly as they were presented without any existential affirmation or status assigned to them.

By implication, such expressions were understood to be experiential accounts given by the individuals I have interviewed without my commitment to the existence of such experiences as exactly as they have been presented. Giorgi (2006b) cautions that making such commitment implies making an existential or reality affirmation rather

than staying within the confines of experience. Limiting oneself to experiential rather than existential claims is to stay within the phenomenal realm, which underpins ‘*the given*’, i.e. the data, within the scientific phenomenological reduction, as it helps to “overcome the natural human bias of stating that things are the way I experience them to be without any critical evaluation” (Giorgi & Giorgi, 2003, p.11).

Because of the above understanding, the purpose of my analysis was to derive from the collection of the original research protocols a description of the essential elements of IM phenomenon. This required gleaning from the precise essential descriptions of the IM phenomenon and the particular structural relationships that cohered with such essential elements into a unified structure. Polkinghorne (1989) identifies that this could be achieved by unravelling, through a scientific method, the essential elements in each interview protocol by first reading the entire transcripts to get a sense of the whole, discriminating such elements into meaning units and transforming such meaning units by looking out for the invariant meanings through imaginative variation. The transformed meaning units were then further redescribed into ‘Situational Structures’ and ‘General Structures’ sensitive to the language used in the domain field of this study.

However, since it was difficult to analyse simultaneously a whole protocol or collection of research protocols, the analytical process was broken down into sequential steps in order to develop a general structural description of IM phenomenon. These sequential steps, as represented theoretically in diagram 5.1 below, constitute the analytical processes that I have strictly followed.

**Diagram 5.1: The descriptive phenomenological analytical chart**

**Step one**

Adopting the attitude of the scientific phenomenological reduction, the entire interview protocol was read several times in order to grasp the basic sense of the complete situated description (character) of IM. Nothing more was done at this stage

**Step 2**

Still within the attitude of the scientific phenomenological reduction, parts were discriminated and referred to as “meaning units”. Such meaning units were constituted each time there was a change in subject matter, theme, plot or an introduction of different aspects was observed in the transcribed interview protocol.

**Step 3**

Still within the attitude of the scientific phenomenological reduction, the participants’ naïve expressions that highlight the IM factors constituted in the meaning units were transformed into management terms with the help of free imaginative variation as well as rendering implicit factors explicit. The situated structures of participants’ expressions were retained.

**Step 4**

The structure of IM was determined and described based upon the transformed meaning units and still within the attitude of the scientific phenomenological reduction. This was achieved through series of questions to ascertain expressions and meanings that directly relate to IM.

**Step 5**

Once step four above was completed, the transformed meaning units were then synthesised into a descriptive statement of essential non-redundant meanings from the perspective of IM, but retained the concreteness of the situated structures in which the participants originally rendered them.

**Step 6**

After the description of the situated structures of the transformed meaning units from the perspective of IM, a general description of the essential structure of IM was presented which this time, cuts across the specifics of the situations in which participants rendered them.

## **5.2 Data analysis**

Some points must be borne in mind before proceeding with this section. Given the resultant volume of the transcribed text and space considerations, only the interview excerpts, as shown in [Appendixes six and seven](#), from the first two participants designated as 'P1' and 'P2' will be utilized, where appropriate, to exemplify and illustrate steps two, three, four and five in my analyses of this study as a whole. However, excerpts from the whole interview transcript, i.e. P1 – P8 will be employed in presenting my final analysis, i.e. step six, as well as the substantiation of my findings, which are presented in the next chapter. It is important to bear in mind that excerpts from P1 and P2 were used simply to demonstrate briefly how the elements, i.e. the constructs for IM emerged from the data. Hence, it should not be confused with the full analysis presented in later sections.

### **5.2.1 Reading to get a sense of the whole**

The starting point in my phenomenological analysis was reading the entire interview protocol. This was done in order to discern or grasp the basic sense of the ordinary or the original and situated descriptions of IM as obtained from the participants. I achieved this by working through the entire protocol, picking out information, but not interrogating anything in order to avoid putting premature closure on establishing the meaning units, which embody the next step. After several of such readings in order to get a sense of the whole, nothing more was done at this stage. I consider it impossible to exemplify the significance of this step with the use of interview extracts as a way of demonstrating how I have developed ideas from the data. This is because this step in the analysis does not warrant or require further action beyond mere reading of the

interview transcripts. The next analytical step was the determination of the meaning units.

### 5.2.2 The analysis leading to determination of meaning units

In this step, I divided the data into parts after series of reading iterations based upon meaning discriminations. In line with Giorgi (1985a), and as identified by Polkinghorne (1989), the outcome of the meaning discriminations was established 'meaning units'. I determined the meaning units by recording each time I perceived a self-contained meaning and being sensitive to a change in subject matter, a change in themes and plots being described, signalling of different key terms or change in activities or topics being described. I have denoted the meaning units by the slashes in the transcribed data as shown in Appendixes six to thirteen, which include excerpts<sup>18</sup> taken from the exact interview transcripts. However, as mentioned earlier, I will use only examples taken from P1 and P2 interview excerpts to exemplify how I have established the meaning units as well as how IM phenomenon gradually began to emerge from the data. Thus, in response to the question:

*What part of that experience would you consider internal marketing?*

P1 and P2 provide the following responses:

**P1:** I say I would all. I really would, because it's all parts and particle./I mean the key bit is the communication side, I keep calling it internal communications. Internal marketing is all about communicating to people and getting people to understand this thing about issues, the whole idea is to get them to have the company running more efficiently, and keep providing a better service to the customer. At the end of the day, it's got to be a point to it all./

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<sup>18</sup> The selected excerpts as shown in Appendixes Six to Thirteen highlight the relevant meaning units for this study.

**P2:** I think internal marketing is the big picture, as I see my management they're probably trying to keep me and that is their aim because they lost a lot of time. The first two years in my job you are next to not useful, they're not making any money out of you. So the longer they can keep you, the more viable you can be to them,/ but of course, it's not only keeping you, but also being motivated and committed to get up in the morning at 5O'clock and be in Bristol at 8O'clock to speak to your customers, to be there for your customers and to get this commitment and get this motivation./ Nokia of course, they're smart people, they try to use this internal marketing, it's a tool for them to keep me smiling, keep me happy and motivated/

In this step, I was aware and conscious of the self-contained meanings in the participants' descriptions, which meant that this step allowed me to use my judgment, as indicated by the slashes separating the meaning units. Commenting on the determination of meaning units, Polkinghorne (1989, p.53) notes, "this is not an automatic or technical process; as it requires the researcher's judgement." In other words, I constituted or determined the meaning units through my personal engagement with the data, i.e. transcribed interview protocol. This implies that my disciplinary perspectives played a key role during this step in the data analysis. However, I took care in order to ensure that my personal or theoretical biases were not arbitrarily imposed on the original descriptions as expressed by participants. Therefore, the 'meaning units' that finally emerged after this process retained the participants' specific and contextual expressions of IM phenomenon without my theoretical influence. It should be recognised that the meaning units are derived from the constituents of the phenomenon, not elements, in that the constituents retained their identity as contextual parts of the participants' specific experience of IM. As Polkinghorne (1989) clarifies, elements are the decontextualised, i.e. contextless, discrimination that results from a reduction of a constituent.

### 5.2.3 Analytical transformation of meaning units into disciplinary expressions:

Staying within the phenomenological reduction, but this time adopting the disciplinary attitude, I first transformed the determined ‘meaning units’ into my disciplinary language at this stage of the analysis. That is, I transformed the participants’ original expressions into management and marketing expressions without distorting the original meanings of such original expressions. These transformed meaning units were concise third person expressions that made explicit the implicit aspect of the original ‘meaning units’ that relate to IM. Essentially, I described the determined meaning units, as in step two above, in such a way that meanings within such expressions relevant to IM domain were stated more explicitly. In other words, these descriptions/transformations, although retaining the situated character of the participants’ original expressions, were my equivalents of the original ‘meaning units’. Thus, the resultant transformations from this step in the analysis are exemplified below using the responses from P1 and P2 to the question - *What part of that experience would you consider internal marketing?*

**P1 response:** *I say I would all. I really would, because it's all parts and particle./I mean the key bit is the communication side, I keep calling it internal communications. Internal marketing is all about communicating to people and getting people to understand this thing about issues, the whole idea is to get them to have the company running more efficiently, and keep providing a better service to the customer. At the end of the day, it's got to be a point to it all.*

**My disciplinary expression:** P1 asserts that the entire experience constitutes for him the whole idea of internal marketing./ P1 indicates that the key area of the experience was the communication aspect, which he says, they keep referring to as internal communication in his company. He asserts that internal marketing is all about communication and the dissemination of information, as well as creating awareness amongst people within the business in order to improve efficiency and create customer value. P1 admits that ensuring customer value is the major focus of the business.

**P2 response:** *I think internal marketing is the big picture, as I see my management they're probably trying to keep me and that is their aim because they lost a lot of time. The first two years in my job you are next to not useful, they're not making any money out of you. So the longer they can keep you, the more viable you can be to them,/ but of course, it's not only keeping you, but also being motivated and committed to get up in the morning at 5O'clock and be in Bristol at 8O'clock to speak to your customers, to be there for your customers and to get this commitment and get this motivation./ Nokia of course, they're smart people, they try to use this internal marketing, it's a tool for them to keep me smiling, keep me happy and motivated.*

**My disciplinary expression:** P2 states that internal marketing is the broad picture and emphasized that the intention of his company was to retain him as an employee, given that he was less useful to the company in the first two years of his employment. Therefore, P2 asserts that the longer the company can retain an employee the more such employee is able to work as intended for the company. More so, P2 asserts that the company also aims to motivate employees so that they are committed to satisfy the customers' needs. Thus, revealing that P2 is obviously aware that organisations should do more than retain employees but ensure that employees are equally motivated and committed to satisfy their customers./ P2 states that his company attempts to use internal marketing or rather, as he perceives, internal marketing is an effective tool that his company uses to keep him satisfied and motivated.

The full text of the above transformations or my disciplinary expressions is shown in [Appendixes Two](#) and [Three](#) respectively, as presenting them here will unduly increase the volume of this section. In the appendixes, a column was used to distinguish the participants' original expressions from my disciplinary expressions. Thus, the column on the left shows the participant's exact expressions and the column on the right shows my disciplinary expressions, which reflect my disciplinary meanings of such participants' original expressions. My disciplinary expressions are rendered according to the discriminated parts, as represented in [Appendixes Six and Seven](#). My disciplinary expressions retained their situated characters given that participants' original descriptions, although often full of ordinary expressions were still rich in meaning.



This step in the analysis is at the centre of the descriptive phenomenological analytical method, as this was where the original interview protocol was first subject to the phenomenological reduction. That is, the first instance in which I transformed the participants' everyday language into my disciplinary language with the help of free imaginative variation. I used the process of free imaginative variation to determine what remained unchangeable after series of alterations to the participants' expressions. Free imaginative variation was useful in discovering and articulating the meanings being ascribed to the IM phenomenon by participants and in revealing its essences as presented by such participants. For instance, as can be seen from the above interview extract, there is explicit reference by P1 and P2 respectively to constructs, such as, 'internal communication', 'motivation' and 'commitment', which form key parts of the conceptual IM structure that eventually emerged in this study, as represented in [figure 6.1 in page 303](#).

In addition, my disciplinary expressions were accomplished without imposition of my personal or theoretical biases, but rather through a reflective process involving sensitive readings of the participants' original expressions. As [Giorgi \(1985a\)](#) and [Polkinghorne \(1989\)](#) identify, such disciplinary expressions did not remain at the level of linguistic expressions, as does the traditional content analysis, but focuses on the experience, i.e. the investigated phenomenon to which the language refers. In other words, the transformations went from the participants' everyday linguistic expressions of IM phenomenon to my redescription by utilising terms appropriate to management research.

#### **5.2.4 The analysis leading to the determination of the structure of IM**

Still within the phenomenological reduction, the previous analytical step that ended with heightened sensitivity to the field of IM was in this step followed by determining the situated structure of IM. Again, I used free imaginative variation, as Polkinghorne (1989, p.55) observes, to “imaginatively stretch the proposed transformation to the edges until it no longer describes the experience underlying the participants’ naïve description.” In other words, unlike in the previous step, I used the process of free imaginative variation to interrogate and thematize each of my disciplinary expressions in order to discover what was truly essential about them in terms of the operating IM dynamics. In this sense, also different from the previous step, I brought to bear on my disciplinary expressions the underlying question and/or objective of this whole study i.e. ‘what is the meaning and structure of IM?’ Each time a meaning or theme emerged that addresses the above underlying question and/or objective, I redescribed such themes as they directly relate to the focus of IM phenomenon.

This meant that there was a constant scrutiny that entailed my going backward and forward from my disciplinary expressions to the participants’ original expressions, and asking, ‘what was truly being described in the transformed meaning units?’ and ‘what was truly essential to understanding the disciplinary sense of IM in such transformed meaning units’. Then, ascertaining if what were contained in my disciplinary expressions were an accurate reflection of the participants’ actual expressions vis a vis the IM phenomenon. Such redescriptions however, retained their situated structures and/or characters. The whole purpose was to enable me to discover and articulate precisely the meaning of IM as expressed by the participants and to reveal its explicit disciplinary form as presented by participants.

In articulating such situated structural meanings, I attempted to avoid the use of theoretical jargons or terminologies as much as possible. Rather, I applied creative and reflective use of language at this stage of the analysis in a manner to present a verifiable redescription that explicitly captures the meaning and structure of IM, which in fact was contained in the original expressions. The reflective use of language involved my careful and sensitive readings of a participant's expression to answer the questions, 'what is truly being described in the discriminated unit?', and 'what is absolutely essential to understanding the import of IM dynamics operating in such discriminated units?'

A sense of themes emerged naturally from following the above process, and such themes reflected an aspect of meaning within my disciplinary expressions that was not immediately apparent, but obtained through my sustained engagement with the protocols and a rigorous process of reflection and imaginative variation. I sought instances of each theme in the original protocols, and if there was nothing contributing to the topic in the discriminated and transformed units, I passed over such discriminated and transformed units. This 'passing over' is an established and acceptable behaviour in conducting descriptive phenomenological analysis. As Polkinghorne (1989, p.54) remarks, "Even though the subject's original description has been given in response to the research question, it often contains sections unrelated to the question. If there is nothing explicit about the topic in a meaning unit, the researcher can pass it over."

Again, as shown in step 3 above, in exemplifying this analytical step I will employ my disciplinary expressions using the responses from P1 and P2 to the question: *What part of that experience would you consider internal marketing?*. Thus:

**My disciplinary expression:** P1 asserts that the entire experience constitutes for him the whole idea of internal marketing. /

I have ‘passed over’ the above aspect of the discriminated unit given there was nothing contributing to my understanding the import of IM dynamics operating in such a discriminated unit. See appendix Four, meaning unit 18.

Continuing with my disciplinary expressions:

*P1 indicates that the key area of the experience was the communication aspect, which he says, they keep referring to as internal communication in his company. He asserts that internal marketing is all about communication and the dissemination of information, as well as creating awareness amongst people within the business in order to improve efficiency and create customer value. P1 admits that ensuring customer value is the major focus of the business.*

**My determination of the IM structure:** There was a view that the internal marketing experience was all about ensuring interaction and information dissemination amongst employees, which was required in order to create customer value.

**My disciplinary expression:** *P2 states that internal marketing is the broad picture and emphasized that the intention of his company was to retain him as an employee, given that he was less useful to the company in the first two years of his employment. Therefore, P2 asserts that the longer the company can retain an employee the more such employee is able to work as intended for the company. More so, P2 asserts that the company also aims to motivate employees so that they are committed to satisfy the customers’ needs. Thus, revealing that P2 is obviously aware that organisations should do more than retain employees but ensure that employees are equally motivated and committed to satisfy their customers./*

**My determination of the IM structure:** From the experience, it was perceived that internal marketing involves the various tools that the company uses to retain its employees, but more so, there was the notion that the company should aim to motivate employees and ensure that they were committed to satisfy the needs of their external customers.

**My disciplinary expression:** *P2 states that his company attempts to use internal marketing or rather, as he perceives, internal marketing is an effective tool that his company uses to keep him satisfied and motivated.*

**My determination of the IM structure:** There was awareness that internal marketing can be used to achieve employee satisfaction and motivation.

This above process was repeated until I felt thoroughly satisfied that the emerging IM themes, e.g. motivation, commitment reflected in as much detail as possible the participants' experiences of IM. Themes arising from the above process formed part of the next analytical step, which were rendered as the descriptive written statement of essential and non-redundant meanings that constitute the structure of IM. Thus, using the same transformed meaning units from the excerpts gathered from P1 and P2 the determined structure of IM that emerged from this analytical step is fully presented in [Appendixes Four and Five](#) respectively. The column on the left shows my disciplinary expressions, as in step 3 above, and the column on the right shows the determined situated structure of IM.

#### **5.2.5 The analysis leading to the synthesis of transformed meaning units:**

Having determined the situated structure of IM by redescribing my disciplinary expressions as explained above, my next analytical step was to synthesize and link the redescriptions together into a descriptive statement of essential, nonredundant meanings relevant to management research. Such transformed meaning units relate to each other and to the sense of each participant's interview protocol, as illustrated

below using excerpts from P1 and P2 respectively. The synthesis of the transformed meaning units, as in the previous steps in the analysis of this study continues to include the correctness and the specifics of the situation in which the participants experienced and rendered their experiences of IM. However, this particular step unlike the previous steps, specifically answered the question, ‘What is the experiential structure of IM in management and or marketing terms as it presented itself to this participant in this particular situation?’ Again, as in the foregoing, I have used only the excerpts from P1 and P2 interview transcripts to illustrate the syntheses of the transformed meaning units:

#### **Synthesis of transformed meaning units for P1:**

Through a project on **internal communication**<sup>19</sup> following complaints about lack of communication between departments, P1 describes his [IM] experience and its importance to **interdepartmental interactions** within the organisation. He also uncovers through the project that employees lack an understanding of their individual responsibilities within the business. Having become aware of this, P1 says he was **motivated** along with other colleagues to urge the directors of the company to lead the way in putting in place proper channels of communication across the business. Such awareness grew even stronger, which, as he describes, entails **creating internal awareness of organisational objectives as well as encouraging the idea of employee involvement in what the business aims to achieve**. In retrospect, P1 notes that the packaging problems, which his company encountered in the past could have been prevented had employees been provided with the right information and the relevant **training** to enable them to undertake their tasks. Nevertheless, P1 attributes the packaging problems to the employees’ lack of information as to whose responsibility it was to **train them**. P1 affirms that the project on internal communication was actually his experience of internal marketing, although he admits it was being referred to as **internal communication within his company**. P1 implicitly recognises that from the experience, internal marketing involves employees’ involvement with the company’s activities as well as how to disseminate information within the company. However, one of the key aspects that emerged from the experience was the need to provide better **training** so that employees could have a broad knowledge of activities across the business as well as an understanding of their **respective responsibilities, their customers and what such customers want from the company**. P1 envisages that the [IM] experience would signal a new cultural

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<sup>19</sup> The shaded parts in the data transformations as shown in steps 5 and 6 under sections 5.2.5 & 5.2.6 exemplify how the links have been made between the ideas I have developed and the data. That is, how the constructs for IM emerged from the data.

direction within the company, and thinks that such a new direction was one of the anticipated outcomes of the experience. However, P1 emphasizes that the new direction could only be successful if it received strong support from top-level managers, as such, a support was vital to implementing the proposals arising from undertaking the project. P1 demonstrates explicit understanding of specific criteria for implementing the key aims of the experience. He manifests such understanding by emphasising the need to engage employees with what the company aims to achieve rather than just giving them instructions without explaining to them why such instructions were necessary. Having established such an understanding, P1 affirms that the proposed approach will ultimately, engender integration and empower employees, especially, the middle level managers to handle the day-to-day running of the business despite his suspicion, that more recently, organisations seem to be weakening middle-level management positions. P1 states that the goal of the experience was to ensure effective interaction between departments within the company, which he perceives should lead to better co-ordination of customer service for the company. Based on such perception, and regardless of what the theories were, P1 describes his experience as individual involvement in the strategic directions of the business and to ensure that individuals are empowered with knowledge and understanding of their responsibilities as well as those of other departments within the organisation, in order to enable them to work together, especially, between departments.

### **Synthesis of transformed meaning units for P2:**

P2 describes his [IM] experience as instances in which organizations, and particularly, his company deploys various communication tools, such as, webcast, emails and PowerPoint presentations in order to communicate and share information with him. P2 says that since his company desires to be seen as a communication company, it tends to encourage open communication amongst its workforce regardless of their geographical locations. According to P2, this helps the company to provide their customers with similar brand experience globally, in terms of customer service experience. P2 perceives that such open communication is an attitude within the company, as individuals who appear keen and able to relate with people from different cultural backgrounds are more likely to be employed by the company. From being aware of the relevance of training and interactions amongst individuals and across departments, P2 states that training is taken seriously within his company, as it is vital to sustaining and enhancing interdepartmental and interpersonal co-ordination amongst employees. P2 says from his own experience, that the aims of the experience were to achieve employee motivation and commitment and that the company uses various tools, such as, bonuses, paid holiday and broadband services as motivational and reward incentives in order to achieve such aims. P2 illustrates with an example of how his company rewarded him with a bonus at the end of the year because he was part of a particular project earlier in the same year. With such illustration, P2 affirms that bonus was one of the features of the experience, which his company uses in order to keep employees motivated and committed to achieving customers' needs.

### 5.2.6 The analysis leading to the description of IM at the general level:

A general structural description of IM was developed from the entire interview protocol following the determination of the situated structure of IM. At this stage, I left out the particulars of the specific situations in which the participants reported their respective IM experiences. Rather, I focused upon aspects of the IM experience included in the whole protocol that have a similarity or descriptive of IM in general. Although, the description at the general level does not claim a universal structure, it is however, important to highlight that such general description claims general validity beyond the specific situations in which each participant has rendered his or her expressions.

In a departure from my previous illustrations, I have used excerpts from the whole interview transcripts in establishing how the various elements or constructs that constitute the IM phenomenon emerged from the data at the general level<sup>20</sup> of the analysis. This decision was necessary in order to provide a better frame through which to understand the transituational structure of IM that emerged at this stage. Thus, the general description of the structure of IM is:

Internal marketing involves the ability of an organisation to use various **internal communication** tools, such as, webcast, emails, videos, and power-point presentations in order to communicate and encourage **both interpersonal and interdepartmental interactions** within the organisation. Such communication occurs at two levels - two-way communication and face-to-face amongst all levels of individuals within the organisation. IM involves a number of internal activities namely; **understanding the organisation** - by way of individuals needs and responsibilities being understood and integrated with business needs through the employee internal survey, and creating employees' awareness of the activities of different departments within the business in order to enable them to cross-sell during their interactions with external customers; **management support** - by way of managers devoting time to listen to the concerns of every individual

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<sup>20</sup> Excerpts from the full interview transcripts as well as the illustrative transformations are available in the appendixes as indicated.



within the business including providing them with emotional support. IM is also perceived as a way through which **employees can be empowered** to be able to deal with the strategic needs of the business and the customers through the provision of requisite **training**, exchange of information as well as the use of appropriate **reward** tools, such as, bonus, praise, and awards in order to **motivate** and retain employees within the organisation. There is a perception that since employees are the ones who do the job, it is logical to ensure that they are **empowered** and **motivated** to do their jobs effectively by way of the organisation removing any inhibiting factors that prevent employees' maximum performance. To this end, both **empowerment** and **motivation** are perceived as elements that bring about employees' sustained appreciation of the needs of the business as well as their **commitment** towards satisfying the overall needs of both the internal and the external customers.

As can be seen from the various steps in the analysis, as exemplified in steps two, three, four and five, using excerpts taken from P1 and P2, I have derived the various elements or constructs for IM structure, as represented in **diagram 6.1, page 303**, from series of meaning transformations from the data. Each stage of the analysis represents a refined version of the previous step. In particular, the description of IM at the general level highlights how elements, such as, internal communication, reward, training, motivation, empowerment, interdepartmental interaction, understanding the organisation, top management support and commitment have emerged from refined versions in a series of such meaning transformations.

### **5.3 The phenomenological findings – an outline**

This section presents the findings from the phenomenological analyses of the transcribed interviews. Because of the number of interviews and the resultant space considerations, only the elements i.e. the contextless constituents that constitute the essential structure of IM will be presented under this section. Such elements represent the invariant features of IM. Invariant features are the constructs or features e.g. internal communication, that remained unchanged when a particular transformation

has been applied to them. These features are derived from the constituent structures i.e. the major IM themes contained in each situated transformations. An element implies a contextless or decontextualised discrimination that results from a reduction of a constituent, which helps to describe the invariant features of IM phenomenon across the entire protocol. Such a description is obtained through the process of phenomenological reduction and imaginative variation. For clarity, the rationale behind organising this section around the general elements of IM rather than the constituent structures is further explained.

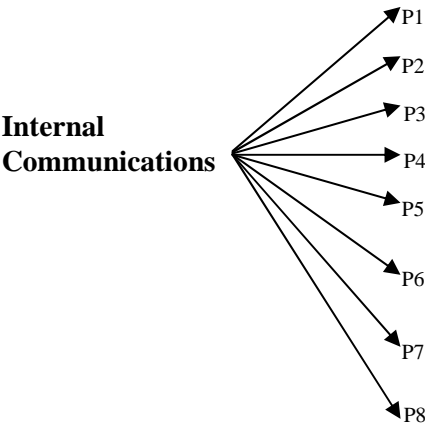
The features of IM phenomenon that remained invariant across the different situated transformations in the entire interview protocol often overlap and imply each other. Meaning that this section will unduly increase in volume if I were to describe each constituent structure that refers to the same invariant feature. Thus, for example, if ‘training’ is contained in different situated transformations across the entire protocol as part of the constituent structure of IM experience, it will be redundant to provide in turn separate descriptions of each such constituent structure, when in fact ‘training’ has emerged, through reduction and imaginative variation as an essential or invariant feature of IM. This is in line with the flexibility of presenting descriptive phenomenological findings in qualitative research, as suggested by Giorgi (1985a). He emphasizes that how findings are presented from descriptive phenomenological analyses very much depends on the audience with whom one is communicating, as far as the same essential or invariant features are expressed in each case.

With this point established, it should be noted that the invariant features of IM, as represented in **diagram 5.2** below, which emerge from the entire interview protocol are interlinked. Each diagram indicates the number of participants designated as ‘P’, which alluded to and/or used such an element to describe his or her situated character of IM phenomenon.

**Diagram 5.2: Invariant features of IM with source**

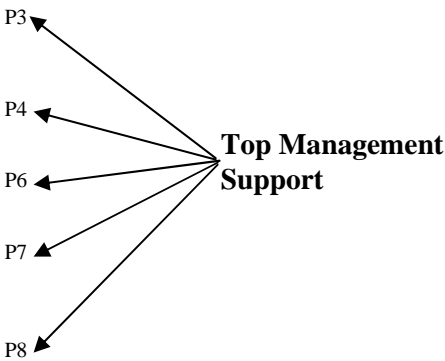
**Diagram 5.2a**

*The element of internal communication and source*



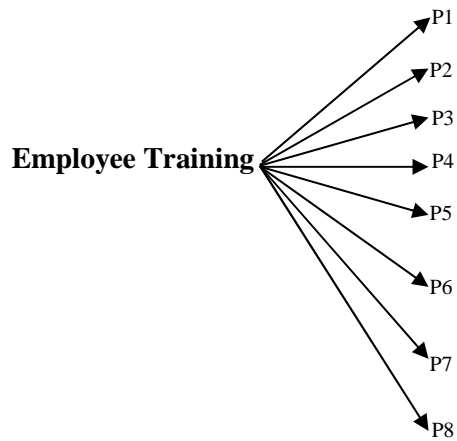
**Diagram 5.2b**

*The element of top management support and source*



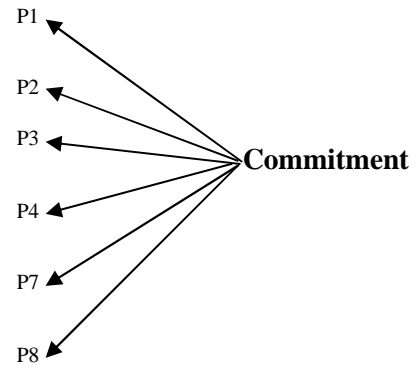
**Diagram 5.2c**

*The element of employee training and source*



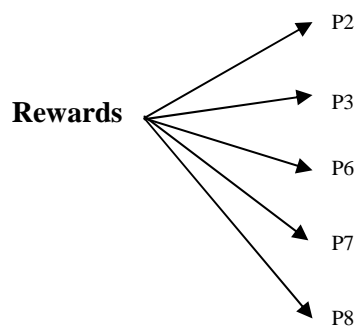
**Diagram 5.2d**

*The element of commitment and source*



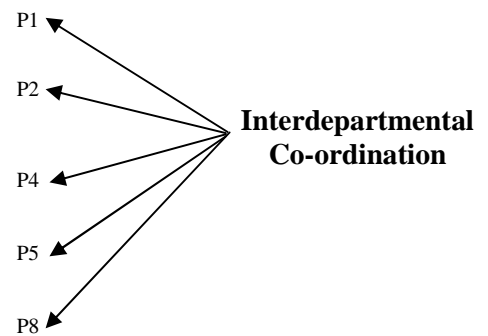
**Diagram 5.2e**

*The element of reward and source*

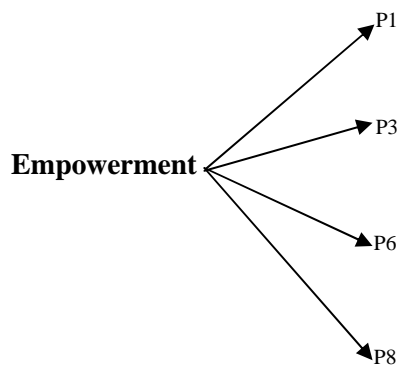


**Diagram 5.2f**

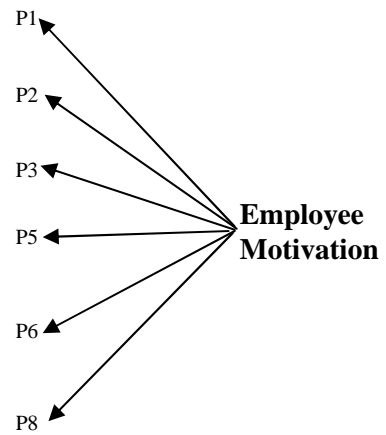
*The element of interdepartmental co-ordination and source*



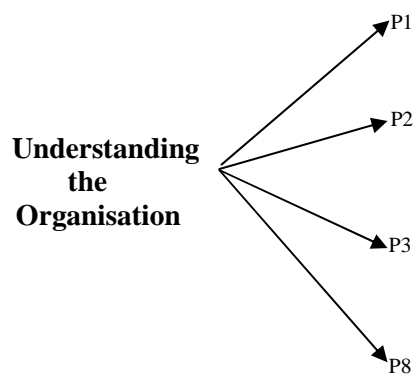
**Diagram 5.2g**  
*The element of empowerment  
and source*



**Diagram 5.2h**  
*The element of employee  
motivation and source*



**Diagram 5.2i**  
*The element of understanding the  
organisation and source*



### 5.3.1 *Internal communication*

Internal communication appears prominently, and in different facets across the entire interview protocol as amongst the array of elements that encompass the experiential structure of IM. It is perceived as one of the important ways of engaging and involving employees in the activities of the organisation. Tools, such as, “webcast”, “emails”, “PowerPoint”, “intranet”, “staff e-bulletin” and “videos” were frequently used to characterise the trans-situated features of internal communication as an aspect IM experience. The above-mentioned tools are used to communicate internally at both interpersonal and interdepartmental levels, as well as between departments within the same organisation across geographical borders. A particular instance of internal communication as an aspect of IM experience that emerges within this cross-border context is the use of emails by employees. It emerged that employees across borders deploy emails not only for exchange of information but also to render help to each other “so that what I do for a customer in the UK might be helpful for a customer in Bulgaria or Holland or Denmark” (See Appendix Seven: MU/2)<sup>21</sup>.

Other facets through which internal communication emerges as part of IM experience is managers attempting to promote the company’s new products and services to employees as well as setting the agenda for the day’s business. This facet of internal communication as part of the experiential structure of IM is manifest in for instance, the ‘Hurdle’ and the ‘DOFT’ (i.e. Deferred Opening For Training) experiences. Described by P3, DOFT usually starts first thing in the morning before his bank opens for business to the external customers. During ‘DOFT’, employees are shown some

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<sup>21</sup>Direct quotations taken from the transcribed interview transcript have been used in order to illustrate and buttress my discussion on findings. Where such direct quotations occur, they have been designated as “Appendix X: MU/YZ”, where X stands for the relevant or particular appendix, YZ represent the corresponding direct quotation or excerpt taken from the meaning unit.

videos sent from the head office or the regional office. Such videos, apart from highlighting some security measures, which employees need to be aware of within their various branch locations, managers mainly advertise through such videos new products and/or services the organisation intends to launch externally. During “DOFT”, managers generally promote new products via videos with the aim of creating internal awareness of such products and/or services as well as with an aim to provide employees with the appropriate strategies on how to market such products to external customers.

Within the context of the “Hurdle”, internal communication emerges as part of IM experience by way of managers using the session to set out the agenda for the day’s business. One senior manager says, “My internal marketing like really starts first thing in the morning with the ‘Hurdle’ because you set your agenda, and you’re marketing what you have to do for that day to get the business right” (See [Appendix Thirteen:MU/2](#)). During “Hurdle” sessions, managers first praise employees who have done well the previous day, but more so, they tell every employee what the business needs to deliver on for that day. As the senior manager clarifies, “If I want them to focus on loans for example, I tell them what I’m looking for, what sort of customers I need them to get across to. So to me that’s internal marketing” (See [Appendix Thirteen: MU/2](#)).

Internal communication as an aspect of IM experience also emerges as a way of engendering a two-way face-to-face communication between top-level executives and junior employees within the organisation. This particular facet of internal communication is evident in public sector firms, especially, Local Councils, and

manifests through “in-the-know’ briefings” (See Appendix Ten: MU/1). During such briefings, the chief executive, his media team and the various directors within the Council sit face-to-face with different line managers and heads of various departments to discuss different issues affecting the organisation. The departmental heads and line managers are mandated to go through ‘in-the-know’ points that emerge with their various teams’ leaders and their subordinates, who are in turn, encouraged to digest such ‘in-the-know’ points and come back to their line managers if they wish to discuss such points further. Participants perceive that such an IM feature encourages face-to-face discussions rather than just the informal emails between top-level managers and lower-level employees. This aspect of IM is also perceived to enhance the flow of communication across all sections of the business.

Essentially, there is a general perception that internal communication is an IM feature that ensures that everyone within the business is in the line of communication. This would indicate that internal communication is an aspect of IM phenomenon that ensures there is uninhibited flow of information across the organisation. For instance, internal communication is perceived to function in this manner in relation to marketing events to both employees and the public (See Appendix Nine: MUs/2&3). As well as in terms of helping employees to become aware of the internal resources e.g. training, available within the organisation that would enable them to progress and develop both “personally and professionally” (See Appendix Ten: MU/12).



### 5.3.2 Employee Training

Participants' expressions of their IM experiences frequently resonate with the notion of employee training across the entire protocol. There is a general perception that employee training is one of the ways through which IM is effective in ensuring employee development across different organisational contexts. Training is perceived as crucial to getting employees to understand their individual responsibilities and that of other colleagues within the organisation. As well as providing employees with the opportunity to develop individual competencies by having an overall idea of the entire business as well as the needs of their external customers (See Appendix Six: MU/13). There is also "soft skills training", in which the idea is to get everybody within the business to "hold the mirror" in front of themselves as a way in which inter-personal communication amongst individuals within the organisation can be improved (See Appendix Seven: MU/5). Although the features of employee training as an aspect of IM experience are multi-faceted, it emerges predominantly in two facets in this study. First, there is routine i.e. skills training, which is perceived as an on-going activity that helps employees to carry out their tasks effectively. Secondly, there is *ad-hoc* training, which is perceived as an intervention mechanism intended to encourage employees to achieve a particular set objective e.g. sales target.

Training as an aspect of the IM experience that emerges within the context of an on-going activity are instances where employees are continuously provided with information, skills and knowledge, as in for example, "correct packaging" of goods (See Appendix Six: MU/11) as well as the various products that the organisation is selling. During training as an *ad hoc* intervention, managers aim to instil in employees the confidence to use their special skills and abilities to execute a particular business

goal, as in for instance, meeting their sales targets. *Ad hoc* training specifically serves to provide employees with re-assurance and satisfaction to achieve the kind of results e.g. meeting sales targets to receive bonus, which they desire. By so doing, the organisation intends to encourage employees to aspire towards being accepting and staying satisfied on their jobs. In this sense, training serves as a dual function of both preventing employees from struggling with their assigned tasks and ensuring that they are happy and satisfied whilst undertaking such tasks. In other words, in IM, training entails providing employees with accurate information and the reassurance they need in order to execute their job effectively.

### **5.3.3** *Top management support*

Top management support as an element of the IM experience emerges in different ways. Senior-level managers attempting to improve an individual's ability to achieve desired results, especially, in situations in which such individual is failing to meet specific set targets e.g. sales, is one of the ways senior-level managers provide support as part of their IM strategy. Senior managers usually spend time with employees by first praising their efforts and then providing explanations as to why it would benefit the individual as well as the organisation if such set targets were achieved. Beyond providing explanations, managers do provide alternative ways through which employees can achieve such set targets. Especially, in situations in which external customers seem less keen to respond to an employee's sales efforts resulting in the employee becoming frustrated in the process because of failure to convince the customer, as in for example, selling new products or services.

One particular facet of top management support that emerges within this context was an example given by one senior manager. The senior manager describes how she supported one of her subordinates who consistently delivers excellent customer service but continuously fails to meet set sales targets. According to the senior manager, the employee's mentality was such that customers did not want to be sold something. However, the senior manager asserts that she spent enough time with the employee by first "building up the positives" in what the employee has done right, before proceeding with an explanation as to how that employee could use her customer service skills to achieve her sales targets (See Appendix Twelve: MUs/1&2). The senior manager perceives that if the employee could deliver an excellent service to customers, then management should support that employee to turn such skills and ability into achieving her sales target by "giving that member of staff support, making the time for that person" (See Appendix Twelve: MU/2). This resonates with the philosophical stance of IM as a vehicle through which to provide employees with the reassurance they need whilst undertaking their tasks.

Such a perception is linked to two other facets of top management support that emerge as aspects of the IM experience. This entails managers being attentive and keen to address employees' work-related needs. This may involve (1) managers being there to listen and to deal with employees' internal complaints and providing employees with work related tools, for instance, training. And (2), managers making out time to deal with employees' emotional well-being, which, as one participant says, "may be something bothering the member of staff's mind, something that's happening at home" (See Appendix Twelve: MU/10). A particular facet of top-management support as an aspect of IM experience that emerges within the context of top-level managers

addressing employees' emotional well-being was a case in which a participant describes how she would have lost £8000 from the purchase of her house.

The participant narrates how the money earmarked to finalise the purchase transaction was not credited to the seller's account on the agreed date of the exchange. This meant that she was emotionally unstable at work and could not concentrate until the branch manager intervened by asking her to take the day off in order to sort out her personal problems. The participant concludes, "...really, I can! never thank that manager enough. May be that makes you work ten times harder, you know, because the manager was there for you" (See Appendix Twelve: MU/11). This would indicate that providing emotional support to employees could itself lead to the employees being even more committed to the organisation given there is a feeling that the organisation also cares about the employees' non-work related needs.

#### **5.3.4 *Commitment***

From the participants' expressions, the nature of commitment that emerges as an aspect of IM experiences is mutually reinforcing. Such nature of commitment is entirely dependent on both the management and employees fulfilling desired expectations, and thus, emerges in two forms - employee commitment and management commitment. For example, management commitment as an aspect of IM experience emerges in the form of managers responding positively to employees' concerns as well as employees' expectations of them as managers, especially, management taking sufficient cognizance of employees' ideas and contributions towards solving specific problems affecting the business.

A particular IM experience that emerges within this context was an expression in which a mid-level manager describes how he presented proposal to the directors of his company on how to address the lack of interdepartmental communication within the organisation. Although the implementation of the proposal would “cost money”, the board of directors nonetheless, as the participant affirms, “are weighing things up...and they are considering it” (See Appendix Six: MU/9). Employees often reciprocate such management and/or organisational commitment by being committed to achieving the organisation’s goals. Since employees derive a sense of belonging and confidence from realising that top management can trust their ideas and ability to make useful contributions in addressing specific problems affecting the organisation.

Another feature of management commitment as an aspect of IM experience emerges by way of management providing employees with the inspiration they need in order to execute a specific event and/or project that is of interest to employees, but which may not necessarily yield any financial gain for the organisation. Such inspiration from management comes by way of providing employees with for instance, the internal logistics in order to enable them to execute successfully such events or projects (See Appendix Nine: MUs/2-5). It can also come by way of management making out the time for different individuals within the business. On senior manager agrees, and says, “actually you’ve got to mingle with staff...get your hands dirty, and live by example” since everyone is important to the success of the business (See Appendix Twelve: MU/3).

Managers interviewed generally agree that committing time to different individuals within the business is crucial to the success of the business as a whole. I see this feature of management commitment from another senior manager who says she makes out the time to listen to her employees in order to take on board their views regarding a particular problem affecting their jobs or the business as a whole. Another senior manager perceives that such managerial commitment motivates employees, and according to her, if done effectively, one could “sell to them [i.e. *employees*] the processes and the way to do it, then you could have a successful result at the end of the line” (See Appendix Thirteen: MU/7). Such management commitment can provide the inspiration for employees to work not only harder, but also, as another participant depicts, to be “committed to get up in the morning at 5 O’clock and be in Bristol at 8 O’clock to speak ...and be there for your customers” (See Appendix Seven: MU/9).

### 5.3.5 Rewards

Another experiential structure of IM emerged by way of organisations deploying various reward tools to motivate their employee workforce, especially, employees who constantly achieve their sales targets as well as those who deliver excellent customer service. For example, “nice envelope”, “bonuses”, “cake”, “praise and recognition”, “awards”, “paid holiday”, “broadband”, “dinner in posh restaurants” and “breakfast” encompass the frequent array of terms participants used in describing reward as part of their IM experiences. As implied from “bonuses”, management reward employees with a bonus not just for undertaking a project, but also for achieving their sales targets. One participant expresses the view that his organisation pays two bonuses. According to the participant, “I get a bonus for my sales, and I get a

bonus for my service as well” (See Appendix Eight: MU/16). This would suggest that organisations make an effort towards ensuring that everyone within the business benefits from such a reward tool.

From participants’ experiences, there is a certain sense of satisfaction and motivation employees derive from being rewarded with praise i.e. recognition and award for doing their jobs effectively. Managers recognise such sense of motivation, and therefore constantly devise forums, usually first thing in the morning, to praise and present awards to employees who achieve and excel at their jobs as a way of rewarding them. There is a perception however, that managers also exploit such forums to set the agenda for the day’s task as well as to convey management’s expectations of employees. Different facets of reward as an aspect of IM experiences emerge within this latter context.

For instance, participants say senior managers usually use the first fifteen minutes of every morning to praise and recognise anybody who has done well the previous day whilst telling them what is expected of them on a daily basis e.g. in terms of what products to sell and what sort of customers to target with such products. Nonetheless, there is a perception that when such praise and/or recognition are given to an individual, “that person is on a buzz, because they think great! somebody noticed what I did yesterday...” (See Appendix Twelve: MU/8). This would suggest that when reward is personalised the individual is happy and more willing to go the extra mile in order to achieve set targets. The use of “buzz” in this context can be understood to mean generally a non-coercive state of employees’ enthusiasm that comes from high spirits towards undertaking a particular kind of activity.

In other words, the distinguishing feature of reward emerging in my phenomenological findings suggests that rewards require to be personalised. Personalised rewards are perceived to give the “buzz”, which in turn, makes the employee feel special. In such sense, therefore, the individual who receives praise or an award feels great that somebody e.g. a manager has mentioned his or her name in front of everyone and recognised the work he or she has done well the previous day, which could mean that the rest of the day would be a success.

### **5.3.6** *Interdepartmental co-ordination*

Interdepartmental co-ordination as an element of IM experience is demonstrated through the heightened sense of importance participants attach to working together as interdependent units, “instead of...being non-linked department fighting each other” (See Appendix Six: MU/26). There is a general sense amongst participants that such co-ordination enables individuals to not only interact but also get involved, and from such interaction and involvement appreciate the limitations of other departments within the organisation. A number of factors generally arise from interdepartmental co-ordination as an aspect of the IM experience.

As implied from the above, one participant expresses succinctly that the sales department, for instance, has to understand the extent to which they can pressure the production department to build for instance, a singular unit of goods for a customer. Because if production suspends everything to build just that one unit, it may mean that production could be pulled back. In the same way, the production department has to understand that the sales department is not necessarily putting pressure on them just to pull them back, but because there is a possibility that customers could sometimes



demand that goods of a singular unit be delivered as quickly as possible. In the same fashion, the accounts department has to be aware of the cash flow needs of the business, just as the human resource department need to understand the particular skills needs of the business in order to recruit people with such required level of skills (See Appendix Six: MU/16).

Interdepartmental co-ordination as an aspect of IM experience is also perceived to be facilitated by the flow of information across the organisation. Particularly, there is a perception that a substantial amount of information and intelligence is exchanged between the senior management and lower-level employees through interdepartmental co-ordination. A particular IM experience that emerges within this context is also manifest through “in-the-know’ briefings”, which are monthly meetings that allow the mutual exchange of information between top/middle level-managers and lower-level employees in the public sector. Thus, interdepartmental co-ordination as an aspect of the IM experience is perceived to stimulate and sustain some kind of cyclical process in the line of communication within the organisation. A line of communication, which ensures that individuals are working interdependently as part of a team and “delivers on something that’s crucial to that team” (See Appendix Thirteen: MU/4).

### **5.3.7 Empowerment**

Interdepartmental co-ordination is not only of importance to employees’ understanding of the functions and limitations of other departments, such an understanding is central and underscores employee empowerment as an experiential structure of IM phenomenon. Empowerment as an element of IM experience manifests itself by way of keeping employees involved with activities within the

organisation in order to enable them to understand what they need to do as internal people, as well as provide them with the adequate level of training they require in order to execute their jobs effectively.

Adequate training and involvement provides the employees with the ability to come up with innovative and new ideas on how to improve the business as well as with making the right decisions that will ultimately, satisfy the needs of external customers. There is a general perception that employees would become more motivated in their jobs from being empowered, as the individual becomes more confident to deal with issues that may affect the external customer. This facet of empowerment as an aspect of the IM experience emerges in different ways. One participant illustrates that by being empowered, he was able to help customers “who have come in, and they’re paying £900.00 [*in repayments*] a month, and I have reduced it to £400.00”, which meant that the customer went away “a lot better off” (See Appendix Eight: MU/13).

Such an IM experience creates in employees a sense of belonging and confidence that their organisation can trust them with taking responsibilities and with making decisions that directly benefit the external customers without intervention from their line managers. Such sense of belonging and responsibility is in turn, perceived to instil a motivating effect on employees. This view is corroborated by another participant who says she was motivated from being capable of helping external customers with their overdraft requests. In this case, the participant says she was able to provide a particular customer with an overdraft despite in between seeing other customers, such that the customer “couldn’t believe how quickly I have done it and managed to actually get her sorted in such a little time” (See Appendix Eleven: MUs/6-8). This

participant affirms she was in “high spirits” and did feel “motivated” from being able to sort out the customer.

As seen from the above, there is characteristically a sense of motivation employees derive from being empowered to take decisions that directly affect the external customer’s perception of value. Beyond this, empowerment is perceived to inspire confidence and sense of belonging and trust, which comes from employees’ feeling that the management can rely on them to take responsibility for their job. Organisations do recognise such a feeling, as I observe from one senior manager who asserts that they as senior management often ensure that employees are empowered “because at the end of the day they’re [employees] the people doing the jobs, and if they can’t...then the manager needs to know what the problems are” (See Appendix Thirteen: MU/5).

#### **5.3.8 *Employee Motivation***

As implied from much of the discussions above, motivation as an experiential aspect of IM emerges in different ways. Rather than an isolated feature of IM experience, employee motivation is interlinked with other elements, such as, training and empowerment, which emerge as part of the experiential structure of IM across the entire protocol. Particularly, employees are motivated from being able to take ownership and responsibility in making certain decisions that affect their jobs as well as the external customers’ perception of value. Such motivation generally comes from knowledge of the job, which is derived from the information employees are given including training as well as employee involvement in what goes on within the business.

However, one participant describes how being able to articulate the solutions to solving different problems affecting the business just by being able to communicate with other colleagues motivates them (See Appendix Six: MU/8). This would indicate there is a sense of motivation that employees derive from having a platform to exchange views with each other in order to provide strategic solutions that may be useful in addressing specific problems affecting the organisation. Having such a platform within the organisation leads to the employees' heightened sense of control over what they do. Motivation also emerges as an aspect of IM experience in the form of management using various incentives, such as, "bonus", "broadband", and "paid holidays", which are reward tools used to keep employees motivated. One participant specifically points out that such incentives are "the internal marketing tools" his company uses to keep him "happy and motivated" (See Appendix Seven: MU/10).

In contrast, there is a sense that employees could also be "demotivated", especially, if they got information concerning the activities relating to the organisation from external sources rather than their organisations. A particular facet of motivation as part of IM experience that emerges within this context are situations in which organisations, especially public sectors firms, are quick to provide information first to external sources, such as, the media, before employees are able to get hold of such information. One participant summarises, "it's a bit demotivating that I can't find out or be told ...information before the papers gets hold of it" (See Appendix Ten: MU/8). Such perception would indicate that de-motivation of employees is just as important factor to be aware of as employee motivation. From such a finding, it is suggested that demotivation (of employees) is not polar opposite of motivation. Since, as I have seen from the above, the absence of what leads to motivation e.g. incentives, does not

necessarily lead to lowering of demotivation, as the two constructs can have different sources of occurring.

### **5.3.9** *Understanding the organisation (cross-functional integration)*

Understanding the organisation as an element of IM experience overlaps with interdepartmental co-ordination. However, there is a perception amongst participants that understanding the organisation facilitates the provision of customer brand experience across the organisation regardless of geographical boundaries. The idea of understanding the organisation as an element of the IM experience emerges within cross-border context, which arises from the exchange of useful intelligence via emails by employees within the organisation. The benefit is that it enables employees to offer help to each other regardless of functional or geographical boundaries (See Appendix Seven: MU/2). Management reinforces such sense of cross-functionality by ensuring that everyone understands his or her role within the organisation.

Another instance of understanding the organisation emerges within a different context by way of management making the effort to highlight the need for everyone in the business to understand what everyone else is doing. Especially, the need for the front office staffs to understand that the roles of the sales people “it’s not just sales-oriented” and that they are not “selling something for the sake of selling it” (See Appendix Eight: MU/12). Rather, understanding the organisation is IM feature, which enables organisations to create awareness amongst employees regarding how they could “improve themselves in their role and reach their targets...and be happy in doing it” (See Appendix Eight: MU/15). Such internal awareness is perceived as a way in which to enlighten different departments that the sales team for instance, aim

to see ways of improving the overall customer experience on behalf of the organisation.

Apart from creating internal awareness along cross-functional boundaries, understanding the organisation emerges in another form in the current study. This manifests itself by way of understanding individuals' needs through conducting employee interviews. A particular feature of understanding the organisation as an aspect of IM that emerges in this form is the gathering of intelligence concerning the issues facing various individuals and departments within the organisation. One participant describes the usefulness and the benefits arising from such an employee survey as helping to creating an awareness of the issues confronting his organisation, which constitutes part of his IM experience.

Describing how his company tackled the problem of lack of departmental communication facing the business, the participant says they had to re-interview employees from different units of the business whom they felt would give them "honest answers" as to why problems were occurring in the organisation (See Appendix Six: MU/5). From the participant's perception, the responses from such employees were useful in helping them to tackle the problem of lack of departmental communication affecting the organisation. From conducting such an internal employee survey, the participant says, that they equally realised that as a workforce "nobody knew who their boss was" in terms of "which person was in charge of which other person" (See Appendix Six: MU/6). This would suggest that without conducting an employee survey, it might be difficult for the organisation to create an awareness of the difficulties it faces, especially, if employees exhibit lack of responsibility towards

each other because they lack the knowledge of their own individual responsibilities within the organisation.

#### **5.4 Summary**

This chapter has provided the basic phenomenological analysis of this study as well as illustrations exemplifying how the constructs for IM emerged from the data. It also outlined the phenomenological findings that emerged from such analyses. This study now moves to the next chapter to present the findings as a whole in relation to the findings of other existing IM studies with conventional research methodologies.

## Chapter Six

### General Consideration of Exploratory Findings and Discussions

#### 6.0 Overview

This chapter presents the exploratory findings of this study as a whole vis a vis the findings of existing IM studies. Since this is the first phenomenological based study in the domain field of research in IM, my discussion will draw upon a wide range of other relevant management literature relating to the elements or the invariant features that emerge from the phenomenological analysis to constitute the structure of IM. Drawing upon a wide range of the literature is necessary in order to highlight areas of divergence and convergence between this study's findings and the findings of other existing IM studies with conventional research methodologies. My frame of presentation is organised mainly around the nine elements that emerged to constitute the IM structure. The chapter also presents a synthesis of the operating IM dynamics from my phenomenological findings.

#### 6.1 Internal communication

There is a fair amount of similarity with the current phenomenological findings and previous IM studies with conventional research methodologies as they relate to internal communication. Several studies (e.g. Rafiq & Ahmed, 1993; Brooks *et al.*, 1999; Lings, 1999; 2000; Conduit & Mavondo, 2001; Ahmed & Rafiq, 2003; Bell *et al.*, 2004) have explored IM from its close association with internal communication. The general emphasis that internal communication encourages a two-way and face-to-face interaction amongst employees within the organisation is indeed one major point of similarity between the current phenomenological findings and such existing IM



literature. In the current findings, face-to-face and two-way communication as a feature of internal communication manifest in the nature of interaction between top-level executives and junior employees through the example of “in-the-know” briefings” and “staff e-bulletins” (See Appendix Ten: MUs/1, 2 & 5 - 6). It also emerges through the use of internal communication tools, such as, “emails”, “webcast”, “PowerPoint presentations”, (See Appendix Seven: MU/1) and “DOFT” (See Appendix Eight: MU/2).

Top-level executives supplying information and organisational policies to various departmental heads and line managers, especially, in public sector organisations enact “in-the-know’ briefings” which emerge as a feature of internal communication. Essentially, internal communication from what I observe from the experience of “in-the-know’ briefings” seems to be a cycle that feeds itself within the organisation. “In the-know’ briefings” engenders a two-way communication strategy within the organisation, since there is a perception that every individual in the organisation gets a chance during such meetings to have a direct personal communication with each other, especially, with superior others who make decisions that generally affect the wellbeing of the organisation members. I observe this from the rationale behind such briefings, which is designed to “encourage face to face discussions”, as one participant points out (See Appendix Ten: MU/1).

“Staff e-bulletins” as a feature of internal communication emerge as a way in which employees, especially those in large public sector firms can create their own profile of work colleagues with whom to establish two-way relationship. This then enables them to share personal information and track developments within the organisation (See

Appendix Ten: MUs/5-6). As with the current findings, Conduit & Mavondo (2001) for instance, recognise that there is a two-way communication that often occurs between managers and their subordinates within the organisation. They highlight that such pattern of communication not only enhances management support, but also allows employees to receive feedback from their superiors on how to improve their job performance.

Internal communication is vital to the functioning of any organisational activity and crucial to internal market orientation (IMO) culture within the organisation. In this sense, the current study found that internal communication is interlinked with inter-departmental interactions and inter-departmental co-ordination within the organisation, as Naude *et al.*, (2003) also found. They note that without individuals within the organisation being able to communicate with each other, co-ordination of any internal and/or cross-functional activities is far less likely to be effective. The inter-link between internal communication and inter-departmental co-ordination is evident from the example of “City Direct”. ‘City Direct’ functions as another way of improving two-way communication that makes information easily “accessible” within the organisation, especially, in public sector firms. According to a participant, it enables people to “log on and find who you need to know and what you need to know” (See Appendix Ten: MU/3).

This study also found that organisations launching new products and/or services usually create awareness of such products amongst employees via videos, which emerged amongst the array of tools that characterise internal communication as an aspect of IM. By being aware of a company’s new products and services, employees

become familiar with the benefits of such new products and/or service as well as the marketing strategies that could be deployed in marketing such new products/services to external customers. As the current findings show, in order to ensure the effectiveness of such internal communication strategy, managers often use audio visuals, such as, videos to get their message across to the employee workforce. One participant provides an illustration with his experience during the “DOFT” sessions, which serves as a forum for setting both employees’ targets and communicating selling strategies. During DOFT, managers often use videos to drive their IM initiatives in order to make employees aware of new products the company intends to launch in the external marketplace as well as the appropriate strategies employees should use in targeting potential customers (See Appendix Eight: MUs/2 -11). This would suggest that IM could be deployed as a mechanism through which to create effective internal awareness of new organisational programmes and products.

As is evident in this study’s findings, organisations generally employ various internal marketing techniques in order to communicate with employees and to encourage the mutual exchange of information across the organisation. Several IM studies (e.g. Gronroos, 1985; Rafiq & Ahmed 1993; Brook *et al.*, 1999; Lings 1999) echo the above findings. For instance, in highlighting a conceptual similarity between the current findings and the existing IM literature, Rafiq & Ahmed (1993, p.224) particularly identify that organisations use a wide variety of techniques and media to communicate their IM programmes with employees ranging from “oral briefings and company newspapers to corporate videos.” They emphasize effectiveness as paramount in co-ordinating the use of such various communication techniques as part of IM strategy, which can be achieved through follow-ups and setting up contact

points. This aspect of my phenomenological finding also echoes [Gronroos \(1985\)](#). Gronroos identifies that managers use internal communications tools, such as, audio visuals, to inform and equip their subordinates with the right level of skills and knowledge. This relate to knowledge about new products and new ways of engaging external customers in interactive marketing function in order to get such customers to accept new ways of doing business within the organisation.

Although internal communication in the context of this study's findings strikes a notable chord in different ways with the findings of extant IM studies. However, my findings on internal communication echo the findings of other management studies without IM focus, but which address the issue of internal communication vis a vis organisational life. For instance, [Saunders & Thornhill \(2003\)](#) emphasize that 'good two-way communication' is crucial to the pivotal role of line managers in engendering a climate of trust and fairness within the organisation. Therefore, two-way and face-to-face communication as a feature of internal communication as evident in the perception of "in the-know' briefings" could provide the platform through which to engender a climate of trust and fairness within the organisation. Especially, in terms of negotiating such employees' issues as remuneration, job flexibility and employment contract, as [Berry \(1981\)](#) particularly identifies. This reduces external influences, such as, Professional Bodies/Associations, since such nature of negotiation places greater emphasis on direct communication with the individual as some IM studies ([e.g. Collins & Payne, 1991](#)) highlight.

The use of internal communication tools to encourage a two-way communication resonates with a particular accord as an experiential IM structure. There is a perception that through such two-way communication, individuals can access resources, such as, information on training programmes, which are available in the organisation in order to acquire knowledge and skills so as to be able to reflect such knowledge and skills “in customer-facing situation” (See Appendix Ten: MU/11).

In separate IM studies, Brook *et al.*, (1999) and Lings (1999) recognise the notion of ‘internal suppliers’ and ‘internal customers’ communicating with each other within the organisation. These studies emphasize that an important aspect of IM campaign involves communications between departments or those originating in the hierarchical structure of the organisation and directed at all employees. Although the notions of ‘internal supplier’ and the ‘internal customer’ do not specifically emerge in this study’s findings, they however, highlight that the communication employees receive through “emails” and “webcasts” generally originate from the management hierarchy.

Indeed, one participant makes the point in the interviews that in his organisation, management tend to communicate and share information with employees using “web cast”, “PowerPoint presentations” or “emails”, and that such information is often received “via management line” (See Appendix Seven: MU/1). However, such an interactive attitude tends to occur at two levels within the organisation – the interpersonal level and the interdepartmental level, an attitude summarised by one participant as equally occurring across geographical borders (see section 5.3.1).

As shown in this study's findings, previous IM studies (e.g. Gronroos, 1985; Tansuhaj *et al.*, 1987; Collins & Payne, 1991; Ahmed *et al.*, 2003; Ahmed & Rafiq, 2004; Lings, 2004; Gounaris, 2006) stressing internal communication as an important aspect of IM resonate with my phenomenological findings. They stress that internal communication is part of the IMO i.e. IM measurement construct that manifests itself through the use of reports, videos, presentations and formal meetings as a way of strategically communicating with employees. In a quantitative study of IM measurement, Lings (2004) found that an internal communication strategy facilitates rapid acceptance of organisational directives and behaviour change within the organisation. Central to Lings (2004) is the view that internal communication strategy parallels the concept of dissemination of information in the external market, as identified by Kohli & Jaworski (1990).

From the perspective of external marketing, Kohli & Jaworski (1990) argue that for an organisation to adapt to external market needs, the organisation must share market intelligence as well as communicate and disseminate such intelligence across relevant departments and individuals within the organisation. Lings (2004) concludes that the same level of internal communication occurs between management and the employees as well as between managers about the wants and needs of employees. Ahmed & Rafiq (2003) echo similar sentiments, but draw a parallel with the external communication strategy. They argue that IM applications involves 'crafting' internal communication strategies to parallel with external marketing communication so that advertised promises can stand better chances of being fulfilled to the required level of performance, as I observe in the DOFT sessions (See Appendix Eight: MUs/2 -11).

Although obvious similarities are evident between the existing IM studies with more conventional research methodologies and this study's findings in highlighting the importance of internal communication as an aspect of IM, there are some areas of divergence. One area of divergence between the current findings and the majority of the existing IM literature (e.g. Gronroos, 1985; Collins & Payne, 1991; Rafiq & Ahmed 1993; Varey, 1995; Brook *et al.*, 1999; Lings 1999; Ballantyne, 2003) in highlighting internal communication as an important aspect of IM relates to the notions of 'internal supplier' and 'internal customer'. Although these two notions appear prominently in the majority of previous IM studies, the current findings do not find a similar equivalent to emphasize the nature of individuals that engage in internal communication activities within the organisation.

Another area of divergence is the notion that internal communication provides the avenue for collecting information relating to employees' needs and the segmentation of such needs, as Lings (2004) and Gounaris (2006; 2008) claim. Whilst the current study found that internal communication as an experiential aspect of IM is useful in ensuring that everyone is in the line of communication since information is disseminated across the business, it does not specifically point to the segmentation of employees needs. The general perception however, emerging in this study's findings is that internal communication enhances cross-functional dissemination of information similar to the findings of Ahmed & Rafiq (2003) and Lings & Greenley (2005).

In sum, this study's findings highlight the dynamic process of internal communication as an experiential structure of IM occurring across geographical boundaries through the use of various vehicles (See Appendix Seven: MUs/1 & 2). This is very much like

the use of different media in an external marketing context. In external marketing, communications are used to set expectations and how needs are satisfied, and tends to be unidirectional. In contrast with IM, communication is bidirectional, and is used to set targets, provide and enhance information to improve employee skills, awareness and performance. Of utmost importance is that with IM, I see a “reciprocal exchange”, in which employees receive information from managers to improve sales as well as provide feedback.

## **6.2 Employee training**

There are both points of convergence and divergence between this study’s findings on employee training and the existing IM literature. In my findings, training as an experiential structure of IM emerges in two forms – *ad hoc* training and routine training. However, several IM studies (e.g. [Conduit & Mavondo, 2001](#); [Ahmed \*et al.\*, 2003](#); [Lings, 2004](#); [Gounaris, 2006](#)) generally find that training is an element of the IM concept essential to employees’ understanding of their roles within the organisation. There is a general notion that training provides employees with the general/special skills they need in order to perform their jobs effectively.

In the interviews, participants indeed perceive that training is not only crucial to providing employees with special skills to carry out their roles effectively, but it also enables them to understand the roles of other individuals as well as have an overall idea of the business. This perception is summarised by one participant thus, “I need to get a better training system in place, so that I know everybody knows not just their jobs, but that they’ve got an idea of the business, what I do, who are customers are, and to understand really what are customers want from us” ([See Appendix Six:](#)



MU/13). This aspect of my findings is particularly in accord with Conduit & Mavondo (2001). They found that training assists employees in developing a holistic view of the organisation by providing them with an understanding of the role of each individual in relation to other individuals, their various functions within the firm, as well as customers' expectations.

The findings of several IM studies (e.g. Lings, 2004; Lings & Greenley, 2005; Gounaris, 2006) as in the current findings similarly identify *ad hoc* training as an aspect of IM. This is aimed at providing employees with specific skills in order to improve their abilities in executing particular functions within the organisation. One particular area of similarity is with Lings (2004) and Gounaris (2006), who identify training as response behaviour in their operationalisation of the IM measurement construct. Such a view of training is evident in the current findings. I see training as response behaviour from the experience of a senior manager who describes how she trains her subordinates "on their job all the time" by making the time to have a dialogue with them on how to improve their effectiveness, which ultimately motivates employees (See Appendix Thirteen: MU/3). Although there is a considerable degree of similarity between the findings of the above studies and this study's findings with regard to *ad hoc* training, one area deserves attention.

Unlike Lings (2004) and Gounaris (2006), this study found that apart from training that occurs in form of management response behaviour, training emerges in form of a tool used to engender employee reassurance and satisfaction in order to enable them to do their job. This would indicate there is a perception that employee training could sometimes be an impromptu activity aimed at empowering and motivating the

individual to trust in his or her own innate abilities to achieve desired expectations. One could suggest that such training is usually provided on a-need-arise basis and targeted at the individual with an aim towards equipping such individual not only with some specific and/or specialist skills and abilities, but also as a form of confidence-building exercise in order to achieve a particular set objective. This throws new/additional insights not captured in previous IM studies, as further explained below.

In IM, part of the role of training is to build skills to do the job, but also part of the role of training emerging from this study's findings suggests it is used to inspire a 'sense of confidence' in the employees that they are capable of doing their job, and to make them feel valuable (See Appendix Twelve: MUs/6 - 7). This is indicative of the nature/philosophical stance of IM that differentiates it from other rational approaches e.g. HRM, which tend to view training predominantly in terms of equipping employees with the individual competencies to contribute to achieving a work objective and as part of a work system that delivers on the result sought. From my findings on employee training, it is evident that IM's focus is not just on employees as explicit, rational beings, but also focuses on the psychological/emotional wellbeing of employees. Hence, this suggests the need to shift away from the traditional focus of training people purely as rational entities, but to consider them from rounded viewpoint. That is training offers not just skill development i.e. rational premise, but also re-assurance in being capable of doing the job i.e. emotional/psychological premise.

Another form of training that emerges from my findings that is not evident in previous IM studies is “soft skills training”. During such training, individuals are told to hold the metaphorical “mirror” in front of themselves as a way in which the organisation aims to improve (internal) communication between individuals within the organisation (See Appendix Seven: MU/5). There is a benefit arising from such training as one becomes sensitised to the need to communicate with others just as one would expect others to communicate with one. Although no mention of such soft skills training is evident in the previous IM studies, such training can be beneficial as a way in which harmonious interpersonal relationship can be engendered within the organisation. Since there is a perception that from harmonious interpersonal relationship; employees will possibly begin or strive to communicate more openly with one another in a much more effective manner. This view is implicit in Slater & Narver (1995), who from the perspective of external marketing assert that training facilitates the internal exchange of values, as trainees are required to transfer acquired knowledge to others.

Similarly, as in Ahmed *et al.*, (2003), the current findings reinforce the importance of routine training as a continuous process in employees’ career development. Such routine training unlike *ad hoc* training is elaborate and often designed to equip employees, especially new hires, with the required information, the knowledge and the requisite skills they need in order to carry out their everyday tasks successfully. I see this form of training from the experience of providing employees with continuous training and information on the procedures for the “correct packaging” of goods as one participant describes (See Appendix Six: MU/11). Such training is crucial, as one would expect that the packaging of goods, for instance, in manufacturing companies might vary considerably according to the external customers’ specifications.

Therefore, it becomes necessary to provide employees continuously with the accurate information and the requisite training in order to enable them to undertake such variable tasks without difficulty.

Referring to routine training as an IM strategy, [Lings \(2004\)](#) and [Lings & Greenley \(2005\)](#) specifically identify that by managers training employees very often, it helps managers to develop generalist and specific skills in order to identify and understand the wants and needs of individuals within the business. The idea, according to the above studies, is that from understanding the needs of employees, managers would be able to design jobs as strategic solutions to satisfying such individuals' needs. However, the current phenomenological findings locate employees' routine training as an essential part of an on-going overall organisational commitment towards getting all individuals within the business to understand their different responsibilities. I observe this from the perception of the participant who asserts that training is provided as a way of ensuring that all category of employees have a well-rounded idea and understanding of the activities within the business as well as customers' expectations ([See Appendix Six: MU/13](#)).

Thus, would suggest, as [Wang & Chan \(2006\)](#) also emphasize, that training is required at all levels in the organisation hierarchy in order to equip all level of employees with the knowledge, skills, and abilities they need in order to meet organisational challenges as well as their own individual goals and commitments. Organisational commitment to employee training also entails providing training to new organisation members i.e. the trainees through internal transference from experienced members i.e. the trainer. Such nature of training can be very effective, especially, when the acquiring individuals who might use or be affected by the new knowledge can view

each piece of information and knowledge acquired in a much broader context. That is, when new member(s) can feedback questions, amplify and modify the acquired knowledge from such training in order to provide new insights for better organisational well-being. In this sense, such notion of employee training begins to enhance a pattern of understanding and knowledge sharing between the trainer and the trainee, in which both believe that the training will help improve both their individual and organisational performance.

The notion of employee training within the context of this study's findings certainly bear on enhancing individual performance as a pathway to achieving organisational performance, which can be achieved from internal transference of knowledge. Since arguably, the trainer devotes not just time, but commitment to the trainee's well being. The above views reflect the attitude of the manager who describes how she spent time to train her subordinate on how she could meet her sales targets (See [Appendix Twelve: MU/1](#)). There is a perception amongst the participants that this pattern of training is increasingly becoming common and acceptable in organisations because of its perceived benefits in terms of cost efficiency and for enhancing internal transference of organisational values, as [Slater & Narver \(1995\)](#) recognise.

Other studies without IM focus connect with this pattern of employee training. For instance, [Wang & Chan \(2006\)](#) situate this pattern of employee training within a context in which the individual/s i.e. trainee can identify the potential use for the new knowledge exchanged and/or acquired. That is, when the trainee can perceive or perceives the effect of the new knowledge on his or her job performance, and when such trainee recognises the usefulness and the relevance of the training in solving

work-based related problems. In such sense, as this study's findings show, the underperforming employee, as implicit in [Appendix Twelve: MU/1](#), can only begin to recognise the usefulness of such new/acquired training/knowledge when she can use the acquired knowledge to target external customers and actually begin to achieve her sales targets, which ultimately yields both individual and organisational benefits.

### **6.3 Top management support**

The current findings show a fair degree of similarity with a handful of studies (e.g. [Conduit & Mavondo, 2001](#); [Ahmed & Rafiq, 2003](#); [Bell \*et al.\*, 2004](#); [Schultz, 2004](#)) that have examined top management-employee relationships as an aspect of IM function. However, it is important to establish first that top-management support within the context of this study's findings must be understood as a management activity separate and distinct from organisational support. Studies, such as, [Eisenberger \*et al.\*, \(1990\)](#), [Wayne \*et al.\*, \(1997\)](#), and [Bell \*et al.\*, \(2004\)](#) clarify this distinction and therefore, lend themselves to the current findings.

[Eisenberger \*et al.\*, \(1990\)](#) identify that organisational support is a general perception of the extent to which an organisation values an employee's contributions and cares for his or her well-being. [Bell \*et al.\*, \(2004\)](#) draw a distinction between organisational support and supervisory support, and argue that organisational support entails providing employees with necessary resources in order to perform their responsibilities effectively as well as engender an environment in which employees are likely to feel better about their jobs and the outcomes required of them. In contrast, [Conduit & Mavondo \(2001\)](#) suggest that top management support is linked to senior managers encouraging requisite behaviours amongst employees, and as role models,

demonstrate dedication to employees' concerns as internal customers. Similarly, Bell *et al.*, (2004) define top-management (also supervisory) support as the degree of consideration expressed by immediate managers or supervisors for subordinates.

Aspects of the above views are evident in the current findings. They emerge in the perception amongst participants that IM entails top-level managers making the time to listen, provide support and to deal with employees' related issues (See Appendix Twelve: MUs/9-11). As in the current findings, Bell *et al.*, (2004) found in a quantitative study of twenty thousand employees within a retail organisation comprising 130 stores, that support from top managers often reinforced positive employees' relations. Such positive employees' relations in turn, were found to have strong relationship with employees' level of job motivation and commitment to customer service. Supportive supervisor-employee relationships are often characterised by greater communication and role definition. Consistent with the above study, my findings suggest that top managerial support enhances employees' job performance and keeps employees motivated and committed towards achieving organisational goals.

Whilst Bell *et al.*, (2004) highlight that linked with such top-managerial support, friendly work environment, clarity in both role definition and communication leads to such employee motivation and commitment. This study found that employee motivation and commitment, as features of top-management support unfolds through emotional dialogue between managers and their subordinates. I see evidence of this emotional dialogue from the experience of the participant who says she was motivated and committed because her branch manager supported her by taking the time out to

understand her personal needs and gave her the day off in order to deal with such needs. The participant affirms she developed a heightened level of commitment to the organisation (See Appendix Twelve: MU/11). In this case, it is useful to highlight that the problem involved was unrelated to the employee's job functions, but the nature of the problem was such that affected her emotional stability and well-being in functioning effectively on her job.

Such finding suggests that there may be variations in the nature of support that top managers are expected to provide in order to attract a heightened level of employee motivation and commitment to organisational goals. Although the majority of previous IM studies (e.g. Bell *et al.*, 2004) have yet to recognise the mutual benefits arising from such positive emotional dialogue emerging as a feature of top-management support in this study's findings, some studies however, highlight the attitude of IM towards providing employees with emotional support within the organisation. For example, Ahmed & Rafiq (2003, p.1184) recognise that IM scrutinises the "rational" and "emotional" content of the reality of the corporate life in order to create "packages" to meet employees' needs. As highlighted in the literature review (see section 2.7.2) and seen from much of my findings on top-management support as an experiential structure of IM, by scrutinising and responding positively to employees' emotional wellbeing, managers can in turn, expect to have employees that are motivated and genuinely committed to achieving the organisational goals.

Evidence from my findings suggests that emotional support as a facet of top-management support - an IM feature, appears to have a far greater impact on employees' disposition to become committed to the organisation than the conventional



management support. Emotional support therefore, is a particular feature of top management support emerging in my findings as an aspect of IM that is not recognised or picked up much by previous IM studies with conventional research approaches. This is a significantly new/different way of viewing top management support as an aspect of IM, which negates to a large extent criticism from past studies (e.g. Hales, 1994) that suggest that IM is purely exploitative. This re-emphasises the point made earlier on employee training in section 6.2, that IM looks not only to rational aspects, but also addresses the emotional well-being of the individual.

Some studies however, link top management support as an aspect of IM with employee commitment. For instance, Conduit & Mavondo (2001) find that management support reflects the everyday organisational commitment to involving employees in planning, paying attention to employees and being responsive to their suggestions in order to attract the desired level of commitment from them. Such a notion is represented in the IM dynamics of employee commitment and motivation, which are frequently associated with top-management support as an aspect of IM experience. Similarly, Schultz (2004) observes that top-management support infuses the required level of attention and commitment needed from employees in order to drive an effective IM function in organisations. Clearly, therefore, rather than as isolated element of the IM structure, top-management support as part of the experiential structure of IM must be understood within the context of its strong association with the elements of employee commitment and employee motivation as seen from much of my discussion.

## 6.4 Commitment

It emerged from the current findings that commitment as an aspect of the IM experience is a mutually reinforcing behaviour occurring between management and employees within the organisation. Commitment occurs when management fulfils certain desired employees' expectations and vice versa. Therefore, commitment as an aspect of the IM structure emerging within the context of this study's findings presents two facets – employee commitment and management commitment. On the one hand, management commitment as part of IM experience emerges as instances in which managers respond positively to employees' needs and concerns using appropriate motivational incentives and showing empathetic behaviour. Such management behaviour manifests when managers can demonstrate sufficient understanding and recognition of employees' needs in certain circumstances by encouraging them to be motivated and committed towards achieving specific organisational goals. On the other hand, employees reciprocate such management behaviour by being committed to achieve such organisational goals. This is because employees perceive that such management behaviour is a way in which management demonstrates that they care about them.

Again, I see this facet of reciprocal commitment emerging from the participant who asserts that she became much more committed because her manager gave her a day off to deal with her personal problem (See Appendix Twelve: MU/11). More so, I see reciprocal commitment from a participant who says that his company uses different motivational incentives to get him committed to not only be there for the customers, but also on time (See Appendix Seven: MUs/6-9). This would indicate that IM demands “reciprocated commitment”, which relates back to the specific nuance of IM philosophy as non-exploitative. IM asks/demands that management give their

commitment i.e. management must give in order to receive it back, which must be more than incentives. This aspect of the findings is indeed particularly consistent with [Ahmed & Rafiq \(2003\)](#), who recognise that management commitment to employees' needs and concerns is a necessary condition to attract a reciprocal employee commitment to organisational programmes. Therefore, as in the current findings, reciprocity of desired expectations occurring between managers and their subordinates is integral and critical to commitment as a key dimension of IM phenomenon evident in this study. Consistent with this view, [Ahmed & Rafiq \(2003, p.1182\)](#) emphasize that such reciprocal behaviour reinforces the "cycle of reciprocity", which relates to "both [i.e. *management and employees*] parties fulfilling certain desired expectations. That is, when the organisation can demonstrate that it is committed to its employees, only then is it likely that the employees would respond in kind and become committed to the organisation's overall success."

From my discussions, there is reason to suggest that employees derive a sense of belonging and the willingness to do the organisation's bidding when management behaves in a desired manner. From a participant's perception, such employee willingness manifests itself when management can recognise the importance/value of every individual and make out 'time' to listen to each individual within the business. Such perception would indicate that making out time for individuals is an essential ingredient that management needs to take on board in an effort to engender employee commitment. By so doing, management is signalling to everyone within the business that they are regarded as important in the task of achieving the overall aim of the organisation. Such management behaviour has the potential of engendering an environment of mutual trust between management and employees, in line with [Ahmed](#)

& Rafiq (2003, p. 1181) who remark, “IM processes must be conditioned in trust: trust in the leadership, trust in the processes and system, and specifically, trust in the “rules” of the game.”

Echoing the above is the view from other management studies without an IM focus, which highlight the importance of trust in organisational life. Within this, Saunders & Thornhill (2004) anchor employees’ feelings of trust on the concept of organisational justice, but particularly on a triangular taxonomy of Trust – Mistrust – Absence (TMA) in which there is a perception that employees who have stronger feelings of trust in the system are more likely to have low feelings of mistrust within the organisation. Although the above study deploys the concept of organisational justice as a framework through which to explore the notion of employees’ feelings of trust (*and mistrust*) in organisations, its conclusions resonate with this study’s findings on employee commitment.

For instance, Saunders & Thornhill (2004) emphasize the importance of employers, particularly, line managers, continuing to provide employees with information beyond the initial justification for decisions made, as well as being sensitive to employee needs, especially, during change implementation as a way in which to engender trust in the system, as emphasized by Ahmed & Rafiq (2003). Indeed, such managerial effort would require that managers invest a great deal of time in order to provide such information, as this study’s findings suggest.

However, unlike such previous studies, this study's findings go further and elaborate the benefit arising from management being sensitive and committed to employees' needs. From the interviews, a senior manager perceives that employee loyalty is a key benefit arising from management commitment to employee needs, apart from the antecedent perception of having a motivated workforce. According to the participants, if management make out the time to 'talk' and 'listen' to employees as well as take their views into consideration in strategy formulation "you couldn't get a better result from them [*employees*], because they got to be happy...and you can't get a much more loyal staff that way" (See Appendix Thirteen: MU/6).

Other management studies (e.g. Condiut & Mavondo, 2001; Bell *et al.*, 2004; Spreitzer 1996; Kirkmam & Rosen, 1999; Meyer *et al.*, 2004; Shepherd & Mathews, 2000) resonate with the construct of employee commitment as a facet of commitment emerging in this study's findings, but expressed in different ways. Conduit & Mavondo (2001) for example, find that organisational commitment is part of the organisational dynamics operating in the relationship between market orientation and internal customer orientation (IMO), which is considered to be part of an IM construct. They define such organisational commitment as a perceived alliance between the individual and the organisation that is characterised by employee involvement, effort and loyalty. Their study proposes that employees exhibiting such a strong commitment to the organisation are more inclined to accept the organisation's objectives and values.

However, [Conduit & Mavondo \(2001\)](#) fail to identify the reasons as to why employees exhibit such affective behaviour towards the organisation, unlike what is observed in the current study through the lens of the participant who says she felt like working “ten times harder” because her manager gave her the day off to deal with her personal problems. Such failure marks a point of departure between this study’s findings and such management studies.

As indicated in [section 6.3](#), [Bell \*et al.\*, \(2004\)](#) find that employee commitment within the organisation is brought about by top management support. Similarly, in a study of employee commitment, [Shepherd & Mathews \(2000\)](#) identify that employees indicate most frequently that support from the top management of the organisation is responsible for fostering commitment towards the organisation. Employees’ feelings of empowerment are also found to facilitate and enhance employees’ commitment to the organisation ([Spreitzer, 1996](#); [Kirkman & Rosen, 1999](#)). Similar finding is evident in [Meyer \*et al.\*, \(2004\)](#), who find that empowerment practices and employees’ feeling of being valued and supported by the management particularly strengthens employees’ (affective) commitment. The commonality in the above-mentioned studies and this study’s findings is a strong indication that employees’ commitment occurs in the form of a reciprocal action, which arises from management fulfilling certain employees’ expectations. However, it is useful to draw upon the employee commitment literature in order to buttress further the sense in which employee commitment emerging in this study’s findings as a facet of commitment can be better understood.

As seen from much of my evidence, employee commitment must be understood as affective behaviour rather than compliant behaviour. In an affective sense, employee commitment is driven by some responsive action by management, usually by management fulfilling certain desired employee expectations as highlighted from my discussion. Employee affective commitment in the context of the current findings certainly contrasts with employee compliant behaviour characteristic of employment relationships under personnel management practices of 'control and command'. **Shepherd & Mathews (2000)** argue that employee compliant behaviour is characterised and sustained by externally imposed mechanisms i.e. command and control, which tend to generate reactive rather than proactive employee behaviour. In contrast, this study, as with **Conduit & Mavondo (2001)** and **Ahmed & Rafiq (2003)** find that employee affective commitment is an internalised employee belief often conditioned in high trust relationships between the employee and the employer for which the result might lead to employee loyalty.

Since employee commitment emerges in the current findings as a facet of commitment distinct from employee compliant behaviour, it is appropriate to clarify further the difference between the two constructs. Such clarification is warranted from two critical viewpoints. First, given the theoretical confusion that surrounds the notion of employee commitment as a marketing construct, such clarification would provide a better frame through which to delineate and better understand its notion within the context of this study's findings. Secondly, a discussion of this kind will distil implications for management practice.

Briefly, the research scope in employee commitment has proliferated (Meyer & Allen, 1997), which has made its use as a marketing construct multidimensional and unsystematic (Meyer *et al.*, 2004). Employee affective commitment is posited as one of the dimensional aspects of employee commitment (Meyer & Herscovitch, 2001). There is a need therefore, to examine first the multidimensionality of employee commitment in order to gain a better understanding of the notion of employee (affective) commitment as an element that emerges as a facet of commitment to constitute the IM structure in this study's findings. Although this study cannot boast of exhaustive attempt in fusing together the different dimensions that comprise of employee commitment, it recognises that the notion of employee commitment implies "a force that binds an individual to a course of action that is of relevance to a particular target" within an organisation (Meyer & Herscovitch, 2001, p.301). Employee commitment comprises of organisational commitment, professional commitment, and professional (union) association commitment<sup>22</sup>.

Organisational commitment involves an employee's belief in and acceptance of the goals and values of an organisation, a willingness to work hard on behalf of the organisation, and also a strong desire to remain part of that organisation (Bergmann *et al.*, 2000). Organisational commitment encompasses three distinguishable employee mindsets characterised by affective attachment, obligation to remain, and perceived cost to the individual for leaving an organisation. These different commitment mindsets are identified as (1) affective or attitudinal commitment, (2) normative

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<sup>22</sup>Bergmann *et al.*, (2000) identify that organisational commitment generally refers to a psychological state that characterises employees' relationship with the organisation for which they work. Professional commitment refers to an individual's belief in and acceptance of the goals and values of a profession, a willingness to abide by the ethos of the profession and to remain in that profession e.g. medical practitioners. Professional association or union commitment is an individual's commitment to the union or association representing the interests of the individual's profession e.g. British Medical Association (BMA).



commitment, and (3) continuance or calculative commitment (See Meyer & Allen, 1991; 1997; Allen & Meyer, 1996; Shepherd & Mathews, 2000). In the context of this study, employee affective commitment should be understood as a constituent part of organisational commitment i.e. an individual's relationship with his or her organisation. For clarity and comprehension, each of the above facets of organisational commitment as highlighted above is further explained below.

#### **6.4.1** *Affective or attitudinal commitment*

Affective or attitudinal commitment is characterised by three components, namely, employee's identification with the organisation, involvement in the activities of the organisation and loyalty to the organisation. As Guest (1995) notes, the nature of such employee's loyalty ultimately, translates into the employee's strong acceptance of the organisation's goals and values and a willingness to exert considerable effort in going the extra mile on behalf of the organisation as well as a strong desire and aspiration to maintain membership or remain in the employ of the organisation. An employee's affective commitment therefore, means that the employee identifies with the organisation by taking pride in being a member of the organisation and the internalisation of its goals and values. This entails a psychological absorption in the activities of his or her role for the good of the organisation, whilst his or her loyalty to the organisation is manifested in affection for and having a sense of pride and belongingness for being a member of that organisation (Shepherd & Mathews, 2000; Vandenberghe *et al.*, 2004; Guest, 2004).

Such employee affection is conditioned in a psychological state often defined by a relational rather than transactional orientation, which Rousseau (1990; 1995) implies as developing gradually in the form of a partnership between the employee and his or her employer. This psychological state consequently leads to high employee affective commitment, integration and identification with the organisation's values/goals and long-term commitment to the organisation. Within this, Saunders & Thornhill (2006) point to the reciprocity that comes with such employee affective behaviour, which they perceive as more than remunerative. According to them, it incorporates the employee's beliefs and expectations of support from his or her employer, such as, training and continuous personal and career development.

#### **6.4.2** *Normative commitment*

Normative commitment is characterised by the internalised pressure to act in a way that meets organisational goals, interests, and values. In this sense, the employee exhibits behaviours simply because he or she morally feels this is the right way to behave. The nature of normative commitment is based solely on the strength of what the employee perceives as his or her personal obligation to the organisation and the receipt of benefits that activate a need to reciprocate (Scholl, 1981; Wiener, 1982). This indicates that the nature of commitment to the organisation is not because of the organisation's induced pressure, rather, the nature of employee normative commitment is derived from some moral burden the employee wishes to avoid for not doing the right things or doing things right.

#### 6.4.3 *Continuance or calculative commitment*

Continuance or calculative commitment is characterised by a number of tangible investments an employee may have made over the course of his or her employment with a particular organisation and the related consequences e.g. costs of quitting the organisation, together with his or her perceived cost compared to other alternatives. This is evident when an employee declines an offer of better job alternatives because of set of rewards, or as Becker (1960, p.32) notes, “side bets”<sup>23</sup>, which are tied to the employee’s current job that makes it difficult for him or her to accept new alternatives (e.g. better job) elsewhere. In other words, the greater the accumulated costs, the more difficult it is for the individual to disengage from his or her current job.

Thus, in the above sense, as Powell & Meyer (2004) observe, the employee’s commitment to the organisation is defined by a set of binding mechanisms that might be lost if he or she accepts such perceived better alternatives. Such binding mechanisms could include financial accruals, such as, a pension, or a network of supportive co-workers and friends. Therefore, the individual is impelled to remain in the organisation because he or she might consider the cost of building up such support mechanisms elsewhere too high to bear. Within the management literature (e.g. Saunders & Thornhill, 2006) however, the nature of employees’ continuance or calculative commitment has recently been linked to contextual factors in which employees on forced temporary contracts<sup>24</sup>, as opposed to those on permanent contracts, have been found to develop a more calculative approach to their

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<sup>23</sup>The Side-bets theory as developed by Becker (1960) is based on the principle that over time certain costs accumulate which make it more difficult for an individual to discontinue or disengage from a course of activity such as working for a particular organisation or pursuing certain occupational career.

<sup>24</sup> Saunders *et al.*, (2006) identify that employees in forced temporary contract are those previously on permanent contracts, but forced into temporary positions because of changes in the organisation.

commitment to the organisation than permanent employees. This is because employees on forced temporary contract is perceived to adopt a more instrumental approach in re-assessing what defines the nature of their commitment to the organisation. This could come by way of reinterpreting their psychological contracts i.e. an individual's beliefs regarding reciprocal obligations, loyalty or motivation, which ultimately reduces their sense of affective commitment to the organisation.

In sum, although the different facets of organisational commitment has varying degrees of implications for employee commitment behaviour, common to such facets is the possibility of binding the employee to the organisation. In particular, regardless of the target commitment, all three facets bind the employee to a course of action contained within the constraints of organisational commitment. Consistent with this view, Meyer *et al.*, (2004, p.994) note that “the likelihood of the employee being bound to an organisation increases with the strength of his or her affective commitment, and to a lesser extent, with his or her normative commitment, and by some implication, on the depth of his or her continuance commitment.” However, the wider research (e.g. Meyer *et al.*, 2004) in employee commitment shows that affective commitment is the facet with the strongest positive relationship with employee job performance and organisational citizenship behaviour. Therefore, such notion of affective commitment relates closely to the findings of the current study on employee commitment as seen from much of my illustrations. In this research, I find that affective commitment is a key component of IM phenomenon.

## 6.5 Reward

Reward as an experiential aspect of IM resonates with array of terms, such as, “awards”, “praise”, “bonuses”, “cake”, “breakfast”, “paid holiday”, “broadband” and “dinner in posh restaurants.” These array of terms reflect attempts to ‘cast a wider net’ by organisations in their efforts to not only reward their employees but also hopefully retain their workforce. Such organisational action within the context of the current findings is perceived as management response behaviour, given that employees often receive such array of rewards from exhibiting certain requisite actions or accomplishments that help advance the organisation’s development towards specific business objectives. Employees’ actions or accomplishments include, for instance, achieving their sales targets, providing excellent customer service and successfully contributing to a project in which the organisation made significant gains.

I see reward as management response behaviour from the participant who describes how his company rewarded employees at the end of the year for contributing to the success of a big project in which the company made some profits. The participant asserts, “For example, I did a big project at the start of the year, and the end of that year I got a nice bonus...I got a nice envelope, and in there was a large amount of money, which was nice. That of course, is one of the internal marketing tools they [*his company*] have” (See Appendix Seven: MU/10).

Organisations also reward employees for achieving their sales targets and for providing excellent customer service. As outlined in section 5.3.5, employees get a bonus for achieving their sales targets as well as for providing excellent customer service. Although employees generally get a sense of satisfaction and motivation from

being rewarded, there is a sense in which management is perceived to deploy reward tools, particularly, “praise” and “awards” as an opportunity to exploit employees’ commitment by setting new targets for employees. I can observe this from a senior manager who says she uses the first five minutes every morning to praise the employees for having “done a fantastic service for the customer”, and at the same time she is also “marketing” and “telling” employees what they need the business to “deliver on” (See Appendix Thirteen: MUs/1-2).

Reward in the context of the current findings closely relates to the qualitative findings of Papasolomou & Vrontis (2006). In their study of UK retail banks, they note that as part of IM initiative, “most UK banks align corporate and individual goals via a formal *rewards* system in order to instil confidence that the extra energy that individuals voluntarily invest will be reflected in their performance appraisal and their rewards” (Papasolomou & Vrontis, 2006, p.191). Their study particularly highlights that bonuses and short-term commissions are integral to the components of the monetary rewards tools used internally by UK retail banks. According to them, ‘individual bonuses’ and ‘team bonuses’ are frequently used to reward the performance of individual employees as well as team in UK banks in terms of sales and customer service. Such findings resonate with the current findings, as summarised by one participant, “I get two bonuses. I get a bonus for my sales, I get a bonus for my service as well” (See Appendix Eight: MU/16).

However, this study’s findings provide more insight regarding the nature of strategic rewards that affect employee motivation. For instance, one participant asserts that the bonus he receives because of his excellent customer service delivery motivates him

rather than the bonus he receives for achieving his sales target. Because, according to him, “service is more my thing than overall sales. Most of my sales come through my service, rather than the other way round” (See Appendix Eight: MU/17).

Papasolomou & Vrontis (2006) also claim that reward tools can often result in a number of conflicts within the organisation including discouraging team building and creating status difference between departmental boundaries. However, the nature of conflict arising from reward, as the above study found is not exactly similar to the conflictual issues relating to reward that emerges in this study’s findings. Although there are some negative perceptions regarding reward, what is evident is intra-departmental conflict e.g. amongst the sales team, rather than inter-departmental conflict, as Papasolomou & Vrontis (2006) claim. Describing the mood on the issue of reward within his department, one participant in a sales team affirms: “the people who get the best sales target aren’t the people who help the most customers”, as “people who deal with just sales do...a lot of the times get a lot of complaints about them because of their lack of service” (See Appendix Eight: MU/4&17).

Such a finding indicates that there is a perception that employees who are rewarded for consistently achieving their sales targets may not necessarily be providing the required level of service to the external customers, given that their focus is on just sales. This aspect of my finding is closest in nature with the view by Papasolomou & Vrontis (2006, p.192) that the “customer-contact employee who aims to maximise his/her commission earnings is often not concerned with the quality of the service-production/delivery process.” Therefore, rather than status differences between individuals and departments arising from the use of bonuses to reward employees, as

Papasolomou & Vrontis (2006) purport. Evidence emerging from this study's findings suggests that there is a need for management to sensitise different departments and not just the sales force to the importance of providing good customer service whilst aiming to achieve their overall targets. A perception aptly summarised by a participant, "If I help them [*customers*] my services gets better, if I help them my sales gets better" (See Appendix Eight: MU/4). The notion of "help" used in this context implies providing excellent customer service as opposed to mere scoring sales points, i.e. selling products and services to external customers.

Despite the substantial overlap between the current findings and some of the above studies relating to reward as an aspect of IM structure, there are some elements of divergence. Whilst the current findings specify the features (e.g. bonuses, praise, and awards) comprising of reward as a structural aspect of IM experience, the majority of the existing IM studies fail to identify the tools that comprise of reward as an aspect of IM. For instance, Lings (2004) and Gounaris (2006) are particularly silent on what tools constitute reward as a behavioural component of the IMO construct. Lings & Greenleys' (2005) findings however, suggest that reward should be designed to reflect the employees' notion of fairness in terms, relative to what they hope to put into the organisation, vis a vis what they expect to get out of it. The above view seems rather narrow and unclear, as it leaves one guessing what action may be considered fair and/or unfair in an attempt to reward the employee workforce.

In contrast, the current findings specify that reward comprises 'bonuses', 'awards' and 'praise' and also designed with employees' well-being in mind, in a way that such reward tools can be viewed as part of an IM strategy that can be used to keep



employees “smiling”, “happy” and “motivated” (See Appendix Seven: MU/10). This aspect of the finding strikes a particular chord with Thorpe & Homan (2000, p.33), who identify that managers believe that they can achieve certain desirable objectives within the organisation by linking employees’ pay and reward with motivational strategies based “on a set of psychological calculations.” Although the study by Thorpe and Homan (2000) does not focus on IM, the issues they raise certainly bear on the effect “praise” and “award”, as reward features, have on employees in relation to their motivational and psychological wellbeing, as seen from my findings.

Similarly, Ahmed *et al.*, (2003) find that organisations use rewards as a means to motivate only those employees’ behaviours, actions and accomplishments that enhance the advancement of the organisation towards specific business goals. A view somewhat echoed by Thorpe & Homan (2000, p.32), who, however, rightly identify the need for detailed empirical research in this area given that employees are “beginning to be rewarded for the success of the organisation as a whole and their contribution to it.” The above similarity in viewpoints is pertinent, and raises some important issues regarding the concept of reward as part of IM structure. One such issue speaks to this study’s findings and includes the question as to whether there is a causality between reward and employee motivation. Further issues that may arise from the above-suggested relationship of course include which particular reward tool/s, or combination motivates employees the most and/or the least.

However, the evidence emerging from this study’s findings on reward as an experiential aspect of the IM structure can point towards the psychological benefit employees derive when organisations use “praise” and “awards” as a reward strategy.

From the participants' perceptions, praise and awards as reward tools are widely perceived to exert a more powerful influence on the individual, as the individual is on a "buzz"<sup>25</sup> to go the extra mile for the organisation (See Appendix Twelve: MU/8). The above findings reveal the distinguishing feature of reward emerging in this study's findings as an experiential structure of IM. It indicates that reward needs to be personalised in order to produce the desired effect of employee motivation and commitment.

I can observe this from the participant who says, apart from bonuses, "you're allowed to take your girlfriend out for a dinner in posh restaurants" or take a "holiday", which he asserts as part of the reward strategy to keep employees motivated (See Appendix Seven: MU/7). In marketing, what I like to do is make the customer feel special, hence, why I segment and do market research. Analogously, employees want to feel 'special', and that the management appreciate their efforts. Therefore, rewards by themselves are good, but when personalised they are able to give employees that 'extra "buzz" and meaning', and thus, create a greater sense of motivation and willingness to go the extra mile. This is because, as one participant affirms, the individual goes away feeling 'happy' and 'great' that his or her efforts are being noticed and recognised by management (See Appendix Thirteen: MU/1).

Nonetheless, this study's findings do not distinguish rewards tools from incentives as some IM studies suggest. For example, Ahmed *et al.*, (2003) particularly distinguish strategic rewards from incentives, and identify that the distinguishing feature of strategic rewards is their emphasis on motivating only such behaviours, actions and

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<sup>25</sup> The term "buzz" in this context connotes a feeling of excitement, energy and motivation, which an individual experiences when praised or presented with an award for having done an excellent job.

accomplishments that help advance the organisation towards specific business goals. They emphasise that incentives include the basic pay systems which organisations use to help establish the culture of rewarding the business activities, behaviours, and values that senior managers wish to encourage within the organisation. Although such a distinguishing feature is not precisely evident in the current findings, reward as an aspect of the IM structure that emerges within the context of this study's findings clearly bears on the notion of strategic rewards as identified by [Ahmed \*et al.\*, \(2003\)](#).

## **6.6 Inter-departmental co-ordination**

One element that emerges in the current findings as an aspect of the general structure of IM is inter-departmental co-ordination. Inter-departmental co-ordination is an important element of the IM concept that focuses on the ability of employees to understand the activities within the organisation since there is a perception that employees achieve such co-ordination by interacting with each other. One participant makes the point that interdepartmental co-ordination ensures that “people are not kept in the dark...so it's easier to operate because you understand where other departments are coming from. You understand their limitations, their issues so you can work between it” ([See Appendix Six: MU/25](#)). Similarly, there is a great sense of importance attached to working together as a team within the organisation, rather than “being non-linked department fighting each other” as the participant summarises ([See Appendix Six: MU/26](#)).

Interdepartmental co-ordination within the context of the current findings is facilitated through the exchange and dissemination of information across departmental boundaries. Through employee interactions, information is exchanged/disseminated

and more readily accessible such that everyone gets involved in what goes on in the organisation. I see such exchange of information across departments during monthly meetings between directors and senior management from the participant who affirms that issues arising from such meetings are exchanged with various line managers, who then pass on the information to junior employees. Interdepartmental co-ordination is also manifest when “the directors speak to the heads of their departments, the department heads then speak to each other and disseminate information all the way to the bottom of the business so that everyone gets involved with what I’m aiming for” (Appendix Six: MU/10). This would suggest that the co-ordination of interdepartmental activities engenders some level of involvement in organisational activities at both the individual and the departmental levels.

Indeed, this aspect of the current findings is consistent with the view by Conduit & Mavondo (2001). They suggest that the organisational dynamic of interdepartmental integration facilitates interactions amongst employees and ensures that the necessary information dissemination occurs between departments. This implies that interdepartmental co-ordination is perceived as an interdependent process that occurs amongst individuals in a way that everybody is part of a team, and delivers on something that is crucial to the team regardless of departmental boundaries (See Appendix Thirteen: MU/4). This perception underscores the need for various departments within the organisation (including for instance, sales, production, accounts and human resource departments) to interact with each other in order to deliver an overall customer value. Commenting on employees’ interactions across departments, Conduit & Mavondo (2001, p.16) identify that “Employees’ interactions across departments provides a greater opportunity for the resources of departments,

including customer and competitor knowledge, to be coordinated and integrated to create superior customer value for customers.”

From the perspective of external marketing, issues emerging from the current findings on interdepartmental co-ordination echo Kohli & Jaworski (1990). They identify interdepartmental dynamics as the formal and informal interactions and relationships amongst an organisation’s departments. They suggest that such interdepartmental dynamics constitute both negative and positive variables labelled interdepartmental conflicts and interdepartmental connectedness respectively. Their notion of interdepartmental connectedness as the degree of formal and informal direct contacts amongst employees across departments in order to facilitate the dissemination of and the responsiveness to market intelligence relates directly to the current findings. Although Kohli & Jaworski (1990) do not explicitly employ the term interdepartmental co-ordination, the underlying assumptions and similarities between their notion of interdepartmental connectedness and the notion of interdepartmental co-ordination as evident in this study’s findings are more obvious than any perceived dissimilarity. This is because both this study’s findings and Kohli & Jaworski (1990) show that the essence of such interdepartmental dynamics i.e. co-ordination /connectedness is facilitated by the exchange and the dissemination of information across departments.

Gronroos’s (1981) view that IM plays an interactive marketing function within the organisation as well as Ahmed & Rafiqs’ (2003) assertion that individuals within the organisation cannot operate in isolation bear out on the element of interdepartmental co-ordination emerging in this study’s findings. From Gronroos’s (1981, p.41)

perspective, such interactive marketing function occurs when professional marketers interact amongst themselves within the business, “but more so, other categories of employees, whose main job is not marketing or sales but production, administration, finance” engage in an interactive marketing function. In a similar vein, Ahmed & Rafiq (2003) suggest that such interactive function occurs between departments when IM begins to include all individual and organisational functions and activities that a firm uses to create, develop and maintain appropriate inter-linkages that result in the delivery of quality expected by the final customer.

Despite the degree of overlap between this study’s findings and the existing IM literature on interdepartmental co-ordination, there is some evidence of divergence. The perception that interdepartmental co-ordination is an interdependent process, which appears prominently in this study’s findings does not find an equivalent in the studies of Conduit & Mavondo (2001), Kohli & Jaworski (1990), Gronroos (1981), and Ahmed & Rafiq (2003). Unlike the above-mentioned studies which focus primarily on creating market responsiveness by understanding the marketplace and customers. However, in my findings, I see that in addition to marketplace understanding, it is necessary to have “own” organisational understanding i.e. to understand the limitations and challenges faced by other sub-parts of the organisation. Thus, interdepartmental co-ordination as an aspect of IM not only creates internal understanding of organisational activities, but also links external responsiveness with internal (considerations) responsiveness. These underlie the key features of interdepartmental co-ordination as part of IM.

Like the current findings, both [Conduit & Mavondo \(2001\)](#) and [Kohli & Jaworski \(1990\)](#) find that interdepartmental co-ordination could have both negative and positive implications for the organisation. The above studies label the negative implications of interdepartmental co-ordination as interdepartmental conflict, which arises from the incompatibility of desired responses across departmental units within the organisation. Interdepartmental conflict inhibits favourable exchanges that foster cohesion between cross-functional units in the dissemination of internal market intelligence and responsiveness to such intelligence ([Kohli & Jaworski, 1990](#)). [Menon \*et al.\*, \(1997\)](#) particularly note that interdepartmental conflict is usually a barrier to improved operational outcomes. They suggest that potential reasons for inter-departmental conflicts could be traced to misaligned cross-functional goals and objectives, non-market-based reward structures, and inconsistent directives from the top, which often manifest themselves in the form of turf battles and destructive self-serving efforts.

Interdepartmental conflicts could also arise from interfunctional conflicts between and across departments. Such functional conflicts exist where one department or functional unit fails to recognise that other departments and functional units may have different priorities and emphasis in carrying out shared goals and objectives. This calls for a greater mutual understanding of different departmental needs and limitations within the organisation in order to deliver an overall customer experience, as one participant summarises ([See Appendix Six: MU/16](#)). In contrast with the participants' perception, [Gilmore \(2000\)](#) for instance, argues that the marketing department's expectations of the functions of HR department or finance functions may vary. Although there is a tendency for one to assume that different departments within the organisation may be pursuing common business objectives.

However, in some instances, this may not necessarily be the case. The HR department and the finance departments' views of marketing activities may have varying degrees of perspectives respectively. For example, the marketing department's aim at providing pricing incentives for customers, good value for money and consistently seeking, if necessary, to redesign products/services to suit customer needs may be perceived and/or construed differently by the operations/HRM department as inconsistent with the organisation's business strategy. Whereas the finance department may consider such marketing activities/initiatives as uncontrollable and/or financially non-viable.

## **6.7 Empowerment**

Findings from the current study suggest there is a need to empower employees within the organisation in order to enable them to deliver organisational external promises effectively. One facet of empowerment as an aspect of IM that emerges in this study's findings is the need to keep employees (as the internal people) involved in the activities of the business "so they [*employees*] know what their targets are, they know how to do it that they can feel the need to do it" (See Appendix Thirteen: MU/5). Therefore, individual involvement can be understood as a feature of empowerment emerging in the context of the current findings. Although there is a fair amount of similarity between this study's findings and a handful of existing IM studies (e.g. Gronroos, 1981; Ahmed *et al.*, 2003; Gounaris, 2006) investigating the issue of employee empowerment as part of the IM structure, Rafiq & Ahmed (1998) is the closest in nature to this study's findings on empowerment.



One major point of similarity between this study's findings and Rafiq & Ahmed (1998) is the emphasis that empowerment enables employees to exercise a certain degree of discretion rather than absolute discretion over their jobs, e.g. during the service delivery process. In addition, the current findings also show different ways through which organisations can empower their employee workforce. These include providing employees with adequate training, enhancing employees' ability to come up with new and innovative ideas on how best to do their jobs as well as use their discretion to make the right decisions that would satisfy the external customer. I see such discretion from the experience of a participant who says because he felt empowered to make certain decisions, he was able to reduce a (external) customer's monthly repayment from £900.00 to £400.00 (See Appendix Eight: MU/13). Such element of discretion is perceived as encouraging employees to have a sense of ownership of their roles as well as to take responsibility for the design of their jobs.

Both this study's findings, and Rafiq & Ahmed (1998), accentuate efficiency as one of the key benefits organisations could derive from empowering their employee workforce. Empowered employees are perceived to save customers a lot of time, as customers' requests are not redirected to line managers or other superior officers before such requests get the desired level of attention. I observe this notion of efficiency from the experience of a participant who describes how quickly she processed an overdraft for a customer. Referring to the customer's reaction, the participant says, "She couldn't believe how quickly I have done it and managed to actually get her sorted in such a little time" (See Appendix Eleven: MU/6). This aspect of the current finding particularly strikes a chord with Rafiq & Ahmeds' (1998, p. 381) view that "empowerment also leads to quicker response by employees to the

needs of customers, as less time is wasted in referring customers' requests to line managers.”

There is also a sense in which empowerment is perceived to lead to both attitudinal and behavioural changes in employees. Such attitudinal changes include employee job satisfaction, reduced role stress, less role ambiguity, and employee adaptiveness (Rafiq & Ahmed, 1998). According to Gounaris (2006), the behavioural consequence arising from these attitudinal changes could lead to an increased self-efficacy of employees. However, whilst the current findings do not emphasise such attitudinal and behavioural changes arising from employee empowerment, they do however highlight an attitude of motivation that arises from employee empowerment. For instance, there is evidence to suggest that employees are motivated from being empowered to take actions that directly and positively affect the external customers. I see such employee change in attitude from a participant who describes how she felt from being empowered to provide customers with solutions that would improve their financial situations. According to her, “I did have a buzz that day because it was really just motivating helping the customers and it was just coming in, and you know, I was able to help them all” (See Appendix Eleven: MU/5).

Indeed, senior managers recognise the positive effect such a feeling of motivation deriving from empowerment could have on employees' job performance. For instance, as one senior manager aptly summarises, “what I do is make sure they [*employees*] are empowered to deliver...because at the end of the day they're the people doing the jobs” (See Appendix Thirteen: MU/5). Therefore, employees' feeling of empowerment, especially, their ability to respond quickly to the needs of the external

customers is generally perceived to lead to employee motivation. Empowerment enhances employees' self-efficacy and their ability to contribute in decisions regarding the best ways in which to do their jobs as evident from much of my discussions. This indicates that IM works at the level of creating self-efficacy, which emerges as a key sub-facet of empowerment construct in IM.

From much of my discussion therefore, there is reason to suggest that employee motivation could be derived from employee empowerment as part of the IM experience. I observe this from the experience of another participant who says it was by given the employees the discretion to come up with solutions on how to tackle the problem of lack of interdepartmental communication facing his organisation that they got motivated. According to him, "it's really from then on I got motivated that, by being able to solving those minor issues just from sitting down round the table" (See Appendix Eight: MU/8). This particular aspect of the finding is consistent with Rafiq & Ahmed (1998) and Gounaris (2006), although expressed in different ways. Whilst Rafiq & Ahmed (1998) provide empirical support to suggest the notion that empowerment leads to employee autonomy and decision-making influence as well as freedom of employee action. Gounaris (2006) emphasizes that empowerment is a structural component of IM, which ensures that employees develop their own self-efficacy and abilities to take responsibility as they gain more discretion over how to do their jobs.

To buttress the foregoing, it would be useful to put into perspective the notion of empowerment construct in order to provide a better frame through which to evaluate the nature of empowerment emerging in the current findings. This is necessary given the theoretical confusion that surrounds empowerment as a construct.

The empowerment construct, as Conger & Kanungo (1988) point out, is derived from the root constructs of power and control in which productive forms of organisational power are derived from superiors sharing power and control with subordinates in order to enhance effectiveness. The core element of empowerment involves giving employees degree of authority and discretion to influence decisions over certain related tasks, especially, during employees' interactions with customers. Consistent with Conger & Kanungo (1988), the notion of empowerment emerging in the current study involves a process of enhancing employees' personal efficacy through identifying conditions that foster powerlessness and dismantling such conditions through formal organisational practices and informal techniques of providing efficacy information.

Morgan & Zeffane (2003) note that empowerment involves giving employees a certain latitude in behaviours, for example, in their job design and job flexibility. Empowerment refers to a high involvement management mechanism for generating commitment so that employee behaviour is "primarily self-regulated rather than controlled by sanctions and pressures external to the individual and where relations within the organisation are based on trust" (Wood, 1995, p.6). Such views speak directly to the notion of empowerment emerging in this study's findings.

The empowerment construct within the context of this study's findings is particularly relevant to Gronroos (1990) notion of interactive marketing. Gronroos argues that employees, especially, the contact persons, should have the authority to make prompt decisions in order to enable them quickly recover critical marketing situations in order to achieve re-sales and cross-sales. Although such a view resonates with the current findings, Rafiq & Ahmed (1998) suggest that service recovery is another area where empowerment plays a vital role, as a speedy service recovery is essential when service failure occurs, otherwise, external customers may lose faith in the overall reliability of the service.

In their study of empowerment, Bowen & Lawler (1992) identify four basic ways in which organisations could empower their (frontline) employees. In their view, organisations should share information relating to the organisation's performance, rewards based on the organisation's performance, knowledge sharing in order to enable employees to understand and use new knowledge to contribute to organisational performance, and finally, organisations should give employees a certain level of authority to make contributions that shape the direction and performance of the organisation. As in the current findings, Bowen & Lawler (1992) highlight the need to provide employees with the ability (e.g. discretion, authority, and/or freedom) to make contributions that shape the direction and performance of the organisation.

However, empowerment as an organisational tool comprises of two-dimensional constructs – relational and motivational constructs, which are often used ambiguously in the management literature. Conger & Kanungo (1988) suggest that empowerment is equated commonly to employee participation or delegation, which makes its

understanding in the management literature somewhat confusing and ambiguous. Hence, further clarification of the empowerment construct within the context of its close association with this study's findings is called for.

There is a notion of empowerment as a relational construct in which employees are encouraged to participate in organisational actions through a formal authority or a manager sharing or delegating his/her responsibilities to subordinates. The core emphasis, as Conger & Kanugo (1988) note, is on the notion of sharing or delegating authority, which forms part of participative management techniques such as goal setting by subordinates as means of sharing power or delegating authority, often equated with empowerment. Secondly, there is the notion of empowerment as a motivational construct in which employees are enabled as individuals to fulfil their intrinsic needs for self-determination i.e. the ability or the power of employees to make decisions by themselves and trust in their own self-efficacy. The distinguishing feature between the above notions of empowerment appears to be with the concepts of 'delegation' and 'enabled'.

Within the context of the current findings therefore, the emphasis is on the notion of empowerment as a motivational construct. This involves 'enabling' employees by allowing them the discretion to take responsibilities, initiate ideas, make decisions, as well as execute actions that would otherwise remain inaccessible to the individual and the organisation rather than simply sharing or delegating authority, as Carlzon (1983) identifies. Empowerment as a motivational construct involves motivating employees through enhancing their personal efficacy (Conger & Kanugo, 1988). Personal efficacy, also referred to as self-efficacy, is an estimate of an individual's capacity to

orchestrate performance on a specific routine task (Gist & Mitchell, 1992), and as Wood & Bandura (1989, p.408) note, “beliefs in one’s capabilities to mobilize the...cognitive resources, and courses of action needed to meet situational demands.”

Therefore, the broad notion of empowerment emerging in the current study must be understood to mean empowerment as a motivational construct in which all employees (not just the contact persons) are enabled to exercise freedom or certain degree of discretion in taking responsibilities and decisions, rather than simply functioning as delegates/representatives of a formal authority or senior manager(s). That is, as Spreitzer (1995, p.1444) remarks, a situation “in which an individual wishes and feels able to shape his or her work role and context.” This entails giving employees a level of discretion to shape their interactions with both their next internal and external customer. Such discretion presents employees with the opportunity to take initiative, and to decide the best way in which to perform their tasks more effectively. Discretion in this sense also implies giving employees some job autonomy and the freedom to make the best possible decisions that would benefit both the external customer and the organisation whilst carrying out their responsibilities.

Giving employees job autonomy, as Gronroos (1985) suggests, can help them to recover quickly critical marketing situations whilst dealing with external others. Job autonomy involves encouraging employees’ own judgment in carrying out their duties, which Thorpe & Homan (2000, p.92) identify as involving “some degree of self-direction.” This is different from employee participation or employees acting as delegates of a superior authority in terms of decision-making within the business. Conger & Kanungo (1988) note, for instance, that when employees are empowered to

apply their discretions, the organisation creates conditions for heightened commitment towards task accomplishment through the development of a strong sense of personal efficacy. This implies providing employees with the emotional cum psychological support and reassurance that creates a trusting atmosphere, especially, in very uncertain situations.

In such sense, therefore, even when employees (as subordinates) are faced with conditions of failure in attaining certain desired expectations or outcomes, they may still feel empowered if their efficacy belief is reinforced by the manager's recognition of their (e.g. team's or the individual's) abilities and performance. For instance, a manager can encourage the personal efficacy of his or her sales force even when they fail to meet certain sales targets thus; 'yes, I have not achieved my sales target for this quarter/year, but I am still proud of your performance and your ability to do better next quarter/year'. Several studies (e.g. Conger & Kanungo, 1988; Bowen & Lawler, 1992) note that such level of empowerment not only engenders an atmosphere of mutual trust in the organisation, but also, instils confidence in the individual or team whilst boosting their willingness and motivation to work harder towards accomplishing the expected goals.

## **6.8 Employee motivation**

Without going into all the contested theories (e.g. Maslow's and Herzberg's) of motivation because of space considerations, motivation as Mitchell, (1982, p.81) identifies, represents "those psychological process that cause the arousal, direction, and persistence of voluntary actions that are goal directed."



Employee motivation emerges in different ways within the context of this study's findings. Particularly, employees are motivated from certain factors intrinsic to the job itself, such as, empowerment, which arises from their self-efficacy belief. As highlighted in [section 6.7](#), I see this aspect of motivation emerging from the experience of a participant who asserts she was motivated just by being able to help external customers with their overdraft requests.

Another aspect of employee motivation that derives from empowerment is the degree of freedom employees enjoy in contributing to ideas that might be useful in solving work-related problems in the organisation, e.g. lack of communication between departments. I see this from the participant who says he was motivated just from being given the freedom to come together with other colleagues in order to provide solutions to address lack of communication affecting various departments within his company ([See appendix Six: MU/8-9](#)). Such findings echo [Herzberg's \(1966\)](#) view that employee motivation can be increased through basic changes in the nature of employee job, such as, redesigning jobs to allow for increased challenge and responsibility.

The current findings show that employees are motivated from being challenged to come up with solution strategies and exercise certain degree of discretion over their job design, which emerges as a facet of employee empowerment. [Bell \*et al.\*, \(2004\)](#), however, found a negative relationship between employee job motivation and employee job autonomy, also defined as empowerment. Such divergence perhaps, arises from the fact that their study hypothesized a direct relationship between

employee motivation and commitment to customer service without providing the constituents of employee job autonomy as the current findings identify.

Whilst a handful of IM studies (e.g. Gronroos, 1985; Rafiq & Ahmed, 1993) show a conceptual similarity with the current findings in recognising motivation as a structural aspect of IM arising from other elements of the IM structure, Papasolomou & Vrontis (2006) is empirically the closest in establishing a strong point of similarity with this study's findings on employee motivation. As with the current findings, they found that "rewards can motivate employees to deliver the brand's promise to external customers" (Papasolomou & Vrontis, 2006, p.191). Their study however, identifies that organisations use tangible and intangible rewards in creating and nourishing a sense of ownership, as employees who feel they are part-owners of an organisation are more willing to work towards sustaining the organisation's success.

Rafiq & Ahmed (1993) echo similar findings by identifying cash bonuses, awards, recognition programs and prize draws and competition as the 'motivational incentives' commonly directed at frontline employees. Although similar findings are evident in my current findings, there is some divergence. Their study indicates that such motivational incentives "can be used to overcome short term resistance to change ...and to increase productivity" (Rafiq & Ahmed, 1993, p. 224). However, this study's findings do not find any equivalent in which to describe employee motivation as a tool to overcome short-term resistance to change, as Rafiq & Ahmed claim. Echoing Herzberg (1959)<sup>26</sup>, some IM studies (e.g. Gronroos, 1985) for instance, emphasise that

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<sup>26</sup>Herzberg *et al.*, (1959) suggest that employee tended to describe satisfying and motivating experiences in terms of factors that were extrinsic and intrinsic to the content of the job itself. They labelled the intrinsic factors 'motivators', which include such variables as achievement, recognition, responsibility, advancement and growth. In contrast, extrinsic factors are labelled 'hygiene factors', which lead to job satisfaction but

jobs (defined as internal products) and other intrinsic factors, such as training, constitute the IM elements that motivate employees in contrast to extrinsic factors, such as, the attitude of supervisors and personnel policy, which Herzberg (1959) argues demotivates employees.

Although no explicit reference is made to extrinsic factors in the current findings similar to the findings of previous IM studies (e.g. Gronroos, 1985), extrinsic factors are however, implied from a participant's IM experience. She perceives it can be “demotivating” to obtain information regarding the activities of one's organisation from external sources, such as, the media (See Appendix Ten: MU/8). The expectation as well as the perception is that management should make available first to employees any information regarding the activities of the organisation before making such information available to external sources. As indicated in section 5.3.8, this aspect of the phenomenological findings throws new insights on the need to consider also the concept of “demotivation” in IM research, and move away from the heavy focus on motivation. Such shift in focus is called for given the fact that having less of factors that cause motivation e.g. incentives, may not necessarily lead to demotivation since the two constructs have shown to arise from different sources, as my findings suggest.

## **6.9 Understanding the organisation (Cross-functional integration)**

The perception of IM as a means of understanding the cross-functional activities within the organisation is prominent in the current findings, and tightly linked to the notion of cross-functional integration. This aspect of my findings overlaps with the findings of other IM studies, such as, Ahmed *et al.*, (2003, p.1237), which find that

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not necessarily motivation and largely result from organisational policies, co-worker relations and supervisory styles.

cross-functional co-ordination constitutes an element of the IM mix that “are most influential in developing requisite organisational competencies.” Their study shows that the combination of internal communication, inter-functional co-ordination, training and development constitute cross-functional co-ordination mix, which ensures that multiple operations and people with different skills set are actively involved in creating and delivering value to the external customers.

Similarly, [Ahmed & Rafiq \(1995\)](#) and [Varey & Lewis \(1999\)](#) stress that cross-functional integration is part of the IM structure that focuses on the effective internal exchanges for the provision of a link between the organisation’s capability and response to external marketplace needs. Such a focus, as [Varey & Lewis \(1999\)](#) argue, ensures the cross-functional exchange of value and information, which enhances the organisation’s ability to integrate its marketing activities in a way that it becomes valuable and a common currency running through the organisation.

The current findings echo such views in a number of different ways. For instance, one senior manager asserts, “as a branch I’re all interdependent, and as a branch this size, there is nobody that is working individually, everybody is a part of that team, and delivers on something that is crucial to that team” ([See Appendix Thirteen: MU/4](#)). I also observe this sense of interdependence occurring across geographical boundaries within the organisation from a participant who describes how they email requests to one another across different countries. The rationale, as the participant implies, is to pull together and combine the various internal resources across the organisation in order to help each other and ultimately, satisfy the customer ([See Appendix Seven: MU/2](#)).

This aspect of my finding is particularly consistent with [Ahmed & Rafiqs' \(2003\)](#) viewpoint. They suggest that understanding different aspects of the organisation's activities ensures that multiple operations and people with different skills set are actively involved in creating and delivering value to the external customers. The notion of involvement, which Ahmed & Rafiq imply, is closely linked to the view that the different units within the organisation do not operate in isolation; but consists of systems and subsystems that interface. Each system and/or subsystem is comprised of specific capabilities and component processes, and only through the integration and understanding of such subsystems can external value be successfully generated. [Ahmed & Rafiq \(2003\)](#) recognise that such understanding and integration occur by way of managers ensuring that every employee in all parts of the organisation is aware of the internal processes and products involved in achieving organisational success.

I see the above viewpoint from one participant who describes how his senior managers often stress to the front office staffs e.g. cashiers and bank tellers, the need to understand that the role of the sales people, for instance, "it's not just all sales oriented." According to the participant, such a managerial action "actually helps get the others to understand what my role is", especially, in terms of how customers can benefit, given the fact that non-sales' staff often think that the sales staff are "selling something for the sake of selling it" ([See Appendix Eight: MU/12](#)). In other words, there is a perception that every individual within the business should be pulled together in order to enable them to engage effectively in cross selling during their interactions with external customers, as [Gronroos \(1981\)](#) identifies. This would indicate that understanding the organisation as an aspect of IM enhances synergistic benefits within the organisation.

Synergistic benefits could occur by understanding individual needs vis a vis organisational needs, which could be achieved through conducting employee internal survey. Internal survey emerged as a sub-facet of understanding the organisation, and helps to make known the various needs of individuals within the organisation. From such knowledge, organisations can design solution strategies that would be appropriate to satisfying such individual needs for the benefit of the organisation. This view is summarised by a participant who says that from conducting employee interviews, they discovered amongst other issues, that lack of employee training was inhibiting the employees' ability to ensure quality packaging of their products, thereby, causing their customers to complain (See Appendix Six: MUs/5 & 11). The participant asserts that a number of issues affecting both individuals and the organisation were discovered from conducting such employee internal survey. For instance, apart from the issue of lack of "communication between departments" they discovered as employees they lack knowledge of "the true management tree as to which person is in charge of which other person" (See Appendix Six: MU/6).

The effectiveness of employee survey as part of IM initiative evident in this study's findings directly echo Ahmed & Rafiq (2003) who recognise the effectiveness of internal survey as integral to IM's cross-functional role of integration. They identify that internal survey enhances the IM's function as a mechanism through which to integrate and understand various activities within the organisation. This is achieved by including "all individual and organisational functions, activities, communications and elements that a firm uses to create, develop and maintain appropriate inter-linkages that result in the delivery of "quality" expected by the final customer" (Ahmed & Rafiq, 2003, p.1180). Importantly, the emergence of employee internal

survey in the current findings as implicit feature of understanding the organisation specifically addresses the question raised most recently by [Ahmed & Rafiq \(2003\)](#). In their study, they demand empirical evidence as to how IM can engender involvement and clarity of purpose through the process of internal survey, and bring together various other elements in the business in order to create focus and coherence in strategy implementation.

The evidence emerging from this study's findings on understanding the organisation indeed shows that understanding the needs of individuals within the business through conducting the employee internal survey leads to better understanding and appreciation of individual needs and responsibilities within the organisation. Through such an understanding, a well-thought out implementation strategy can then be developed, which might be useful towards addressing organisational problems, such as, lack of interdepartmental communication and quality issues as I have seen from the experience of one participant. Therefore, this aspect of my findings clearly contributes to the domain field of study. It provides the empirical basis upon which to understand IM's role as engendering both individual and departmental involvement through the process of employee internal survey, as [Ahmed & Rafiq \(2003\)](#) demand.

Based on this understanding, evidence emerging from this study's findings particularly highlight the usefulness of employee internal survey as one of the effective ways through which IM can integrate various organisational programmes around core business processes and functions designed with the employees' needs in mind and driven from the end-customers' point of view. IM propounds that multiple processes and people with different levels of skills and activities have to be integrated

in order to be able to create and deliver internal and external value at all times. Therefore, consistent with several IM literature (e.g. George, 1990; Glassman & McAffe, 1992; Ahmed & Rafiq, 1993; 2003), this study takes the view that IM's role within the context of understanding the organisation involves effective utilisation of a portfolio of skills within the organisation, which are functionally distinguishable, but driven by the internal maximisation of specific capabilities and component processes for enhancing marketplace performance.

## **6.10 Synthesis of the main experiential IM dynamics**

The previous sections have presented the outcome of my phenomenological findings in relation to the findings of other IM and management studies with conventional research approaches. This section aims to synthesise the descriptive structure of IM in order to reveal the relationships among the elements by considering the main experiential IM dynamics operating within them, as represented in diagram 6.1 in page 303. Such IM dynamics are interlinked, and often overlap, as the foregoing discussions have shown.

### **6.10.1 *Internal communication***

As can be seen from much of my previous discussions on findings, practitioners frequently misinterpret the IM concept with the intuitive notion of internal communication. Participants assert in different ways that the notion of internal communication represents a key element of their IM experience (See Appendix Six: MUs/12, 15 & 20). However, the element of internal communication is present in other IM dynamics, such as, employee training, commitment, employee motivation, empowerment, top management support, inter-departmental co-ordination and



understanding the organisation. Although the element of internal communication predominantly runs through the entire interview protocol, it is through its intuitive lens that the invariant features of IM gradually began to unfold. Tools, such as, “web cast”, “videos”, “emails”, “staff e-bulletin”, and “intranet” embody a range of terms participants use to describe internal communication as an operating dynamic of IM.

Communication plays a significant and crucial role in any type of organisation and in market exchange dynamics. In external marketing for instance, communication through media/electronic advertisements is used essentially to inform customers about new products’ launch and how such products could satisfy their needs. The same is true internally of IM, although in a slightly different way. In IM, communication is used to set expectations as to how the company expects people to perform, e.g. selling i.e. it is used as a target-setting device. Particularly, as I have seen from the “DOFT” and the “Hurdle” experiences, during which managers strategically deploy internal communication programmes as an avenue for creating internal awareness of new products and services whilst also setting the target for the day’s business. However, within the organisation, communication is a two-way process, and it also serves as a process of getting “feedback” on what is working, and where the problems are.

Hence, from IM perspective, internal communication is based on a kind of reciprocal exchange, in which management provides information e.g. set goals, provide resources to employees, and in turn, employees provide feedback e.g. about the organisational goals to managers. The notion of “in-the-know briefings” in this study’s findings exemplifies such a reciprocal exchange of information. I can observe this from experience of a participant who asserts there is a realisation amongst them of

the need “to have regular communications meetings between the management heads so that I can discuss issues that have come up, and then I intend going back to my teams to tell them what’s been discussed” (See Appendix Six: MU/18). This would indicate that at the heart of IM philosophy is the notion of reciprocity in relation to internal communication.

More so, if internal communication were done in a trusting environment then there would be free-flow of “honest or true” feedback. If it is done in a controlled environment with low trust, then information from employees to managers may be selective or inconclusive, as employees are more likely to withhold information, or even mis-feed information. I observe this from the participant who describes how employees gave false responses during an employee internal survey because there was a lack of a genuine mutual communication between the departments within the organisation (See Appendix Six: MUs/1-3). Three operating dynamics including understanding the organisation, inter-departmental co-ordination and employee training mainly overlap and constitute the sub-facets of internal communication as IM operating dynamic.

#### **6.10.2 *Employee training***

Internal communication is present in the operating dynamic of employee training as an experiential aspect of IM. Employee training also interlinks with empowerment and top management support. Employees are empowered from the support and knowledge they receive on their job training(s), which may also involve the internal transference of knowledge and organisational values between individuals i.e. the trainer and the trainee within the organisation. Such knowledge in turn, enables employees to deal

with external customers as well as tackle work-related problems. Although employee training as an operating dynamic of IM occurs in different forms – routine and *ad hoc* training, *ad hoc* training emerged as an impromptu activity that particularly delivers both employee reassurance and satisfaction on the job. It is obvious that *ad hoc* training are often targeted specifically to empower, i.e. enable, and reassure employees to trust and believe in their own self-efficacy, as observed from the experience of the line manager who expressed how she trained one of her underperforming subordinates (See Appendix Twelve: MUs/6-7). Such a finding brings new insights to the domain field of study, as it would indicate that in IM, the role of training is not only to build generalist skills, but also to build a ‘sense of employee confidence’ that they are capable of delivering on their jobs.

### **6.10.3 Top management support**

Employee training overlaps mainly with three IM dynamics including internal communication, empowerment and top management support, which interlinks with employee commitment and employee motivation. Top management support arises by way of top-level managers making out the time to listen to employees’ issues and considering such issues in strategic management thinking. It also emerges by way of managers providing employees with emotional support when necessary. Senior managers interviewed perceive that providing employees with emotional support not only enhances their job performance but also keeps them motivated and committed towards achieving organisational goals. Therefore, top management support should be viewed in terms of its reciprocal effect on employee commitment, which emerged as a facet of commitment in general.

Although one can expect to have a sense of commitment to one's job, the employee commitment operating as IM dynamic essentially emerges in form of an emotional dialogue between managers and their subordinates. This highlights the fact that IM, in addition to conventional top management support, managers must provide emotional support by addressing the emotional well-being and needs of individuals within the organisation. In this sense, from responding positively and directly to employees' emotional circumstances, organisations can expect to have committed employees, since there is a perception that emotional support as a vital ingredient of top management support has a far greater positive impact on employees' disposition to be genuinely committed to the organisation. Supporting employees emotionally makes them feel valuable to the organisation. I observe this from the participant who describes her feeling after her line manager gave her a day off to deal with her personal problem ([See Appendix Twelve: MU/11](#)).

#### **6.10.4 *Reward***

Another IM dynamic that emerges as an instance of managers deploying various means in order to ensure employees' commitment is reward, which is also interlinked with employee motivation. From my findings, reward reflects the willingness of organisations to compensate and recognise every aspect of employee performance. Although participants generally refer to "bonuses", "nice envelope", "cake", "awards", "praise" and "paid holiday" as embodying the array of terms used to reward them, there is a perception however, that when rewards are personalised it produces the "buzz", which makes employees feel special and valued, and willing to be committed to the organisation. This aspect of my findings as elaborated in much of my discussion highlights the distinguishing feature of IM in relation to reward.

#### **6.10.5 *Interdepartmental co-ordination***

As part of their IM experience, participants perceive the need for various departments within the organisation to work together as interdependent units (See Appendix Six: MU/26). Such perception emerges within the context of interdepartmental co-ordination, which is interlinked with the operating dynamic of empowerment. Interdepartmental co-ordination provides employees with knowledge and awareness of the various activities across departmental boundaries within the organisation. This awareness is facilitated by employees' interaction and the exchange of knowledge and information across the organisation. This implies, for instance, that the marketing, the production and the sales department need to co-ordinate their functions and/or activities in order to understand how to work effectively as a team. Inter-departmental co-ordination has the potential to empower employees within the business. I observe this from IM dynamic that emerges within the context of empowerment.

#### **6.10.6 *Empowerment***

Empowerment as an IM dynamic works at the level of creating employee self-efficacy belief. This is achieved by way of organisations ensuring that employees have the knowledge and skills they need and that they have certain discretion over their job design and delivery. Empowerment as an operating IM dynamic is interlinked with employee motivation and employee training. Through training, employees gain skills and knowledge of the organisation and ultimately, become self-directing, as Thorpe and Homan (2000) rightly identify. The organisation benefits when employees are knowledgeable and self-directing since they would rarely turn to their superiors during customer-facing situations, as participants affirm (See Appendix Ten: MU/11).

Employee empowerment not only ensures there is efficiency but also it makes the customer feel satisfied that he/she has been served effectively and in a timely fashion.

Although different benefits arise from the IM dynamic of empowerment, such as, employee confidence, knowledge of the job as well as the obvious sense of ownership and responsibility employees bring to their jobs from being empowered, it emerged that employees particularly derive motivation from the IM operating dynamic of empowerment. This aspect of employees' motivation arises from their confidence to deal with customers' needs given their knowledge and understanding of the business issues.

#### **6.10.7 *Employee motivation***

As implied from much of my previous discussion, employees generally derive motivation from other operating IM dynamics, which characteristically manifests themselves through elements, such as, reward and empowerment. However, in contrast to previous IM studies (e.g. Rafiq & Ahmed, 1993; Papasolomou & Vrontis, 2006), this study has raised the need to focus on employee demotivation in the domain field. My findings suggest that having less of factors (e.g. incentives) that cause motivation may not necessarily lead to demotivation. This raises an important and relevant issue that managers do need to consider, such as, not giving information first to employees regarding the activities (e.g. marketing events) of the organisation before disseminating such information externally could lead in itself to employee demotivation. This form of employee demotivation can have negative consequences for the organisation, especially, if employees do not understand their role in the implementation of such organisational activities in customer-facing situations. This

view underscores the importance of IM operating dynamic of understanding the organisation that emerges in the current findings.

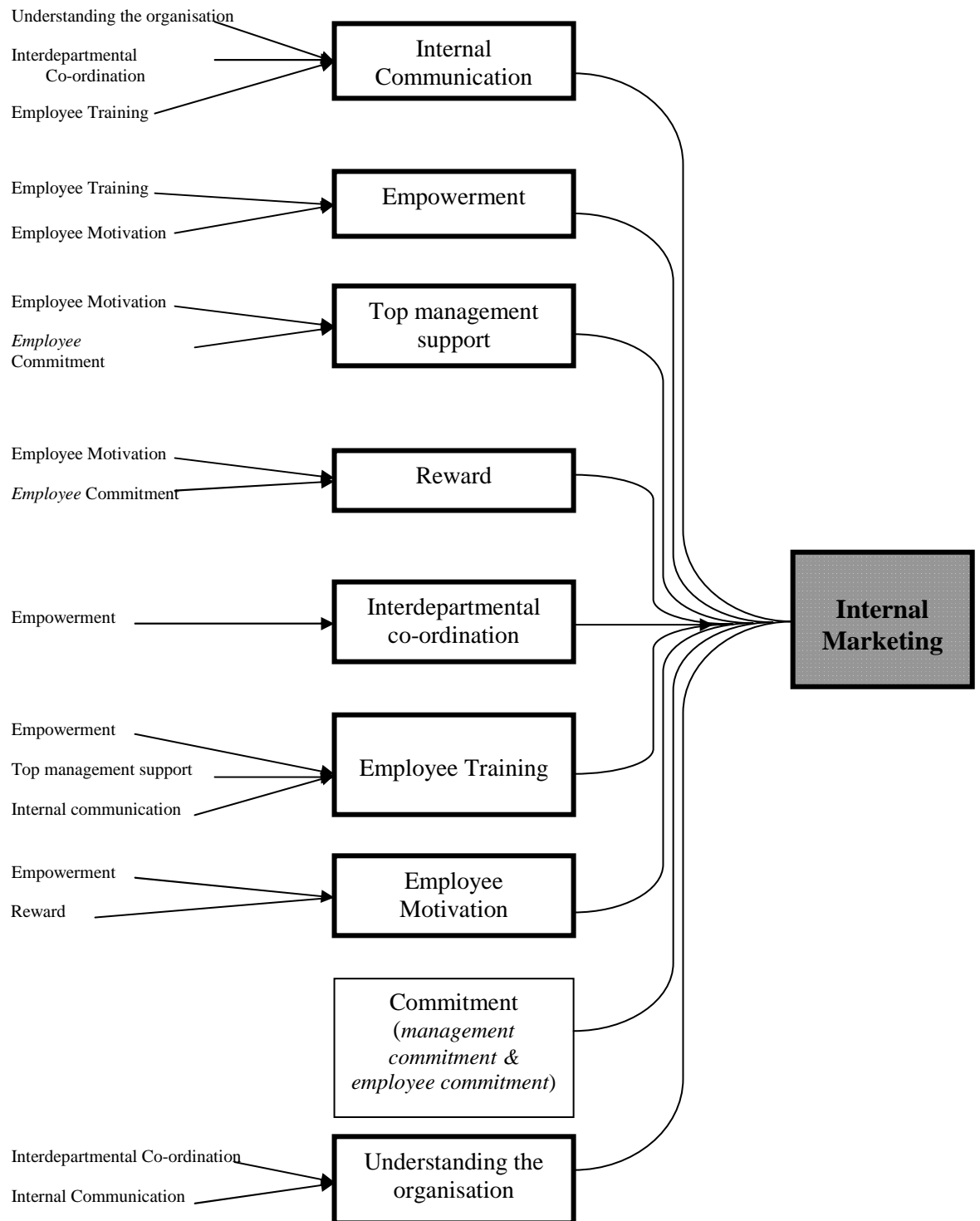
#### **6.10.8 *Understanding the organisation***

Understanding the organisation as an IM dynamic is interlinked mainly with the operating dynamic of internal communication and interdepartmental co-ordination. It manifests frequently through various employees' internal activities, such as, exchanges using 'emails' and the 'intranet', which comprises the array of tools frequently used to describe the features of internal communication as IM dynamic. The use of such tools not only underlies the link between interdepartmental co-ordination and internal communication, it is also perceived to facilitate the flow of information amongst employees along cross-functional boundaries as well as across geographical borders. Of significance is the relevance of employee internal survey to the IM operating dynamic of understanding the organisation. From conducting such interviews, there is a perception that individuals will have the knowledge of their own responsibilities as well as others within the business (See Appendix Six: MU/6). From such knowledge, organisations would be able to design programmes relevant to satisfying both individual and business needs, as several IM studies (e.g. Ahmed & Rafiq, 2003; Berry, 1981) espouse.

Despite the overlapping nature of IM's operating dynamics, they manifest themselves under different forms and circumstances within the organisation. These IM dynamics however, need to be further examined in their specific details in order to establish their degree of overlap and interlink with each other. Establishing such detail helps us to go a step further in providing a more in-depth mechanism for IM implementation in

organisations. **Diagram 6.1** below represents the elements, i.e. invariant features that emerged in the current study as constituting the experiential structure of IM. The various sub-facets i.e. dependent variables are arrowed towards the elements or features i.e. independent variables with which they are mainly interlinked.





**Diagram 6.1**  
*The Structure of IM*

## **6.11 Summary**

This chapter has presented the general findings emerging from this study as a whole within the context of their relationship with other existing IM literature with conventional research approaches. The chapter delineated areas of convergence and divergence between the current findings and the findings of such existing IM studies. The chapter also presented the overlapping nature of the structural elements of the IM concept, the overall nature of relationships between these elements, as well as their implicit features and characteristics. Finally, where necessary, attempts were made to elaborate the specific nature/nuance of the IM elements that emerge in the current study by drawing from the broader management literature in order to specify and substantiate my position in this study. This was followed by a synthesis of the operating dynamics of IM drawn from my phenomenological findings. The next chapter provides the concluding thoughts emerging from this study.

## **Chapter Seven**

### **Concluding Discussion**

#### **7.0 Overview**

This chapter revisits the study's aims and objectives, and outlines the main areas of contribution. The study's academic and practice implications as well as shortcomings are presented in this chapter. The chapter concludes with recommendations for future research.

#### **7.1 Overview of aims and objectives of this study**

This study was guided by three major aims, namely:

1. Methodological exploration, particularly the utility of descriptive phenomenological research method to investigate how IM is experienced in the world of practice.
2. Examination of the multiplicity and the often-misunderstood theoretical concepts closely associated with IM.
3. Commentary on extant IM definitions and key empirical studies in IM measurement with an aim towards providing insights for construct development.

These aims were considered as a result of the problems associated with the domain field of IM, namely,

- a. Contradictions in IM definitions and meaning.
- b. Lack of clarity over what is IM, and whether IM even exists in organisations.
- c. Conflicting studies using very different types of construct, hence, the necessity to undertake a phenomenological exploration.

The above aims will be addressed in turn along with their outcomes and contributions.

## **7.2 The contributions of this study**

This section presents the key contributions of this study as a whole and draws out areas of divergence and convergence in relation to the key academic debates in IM, as represented in [diagram 2.3](#) in chapter 2. My frame of discussion will first highlight the specific and the broad contributions of my phenomenological exploration to the IM domain field, and then proceed with how this study's contributions have helped in delineating the understanding of IM in relation to the wider body of knowledge, such as, HRM, services marketing, and organisational behaviour, to which IM relates. However, it should be borne in mind that the major focus of this study and its main contributions relate to the domain field of IM, and specifically to those practitioners who are exposed to and/or implementing IM in their organisations. Therefore, caution must be exercised in generalizing the findings emerging from this study outside these ranges.

## **7.3 Specific contributions from the utility of descriptive phenomenology**

Given the dearth of research in the domain field of IM, several studies ([e.g. Ahmed & Rafiq, 2003; Schultz, 2004](#)) have stressed the need to develop a holistic understanding of how IM functions as a pragmatic management tool through the execution of an empirical study incorporating the 'voice' of practitioners. This study has provided such an empirical study through a systematic analysis of the experiences of practitioners who are implementing IM in their organisations. From such an analysis comes the invariant features e.g. reward, employee commitment, motivation, employee empowerment, internal communication, top management support, interdepartmental interactions, internal communication, and understanding the organisation, which emerged as constituting the IM phenomenon. These invariant

features were then used to devise a conceptual framework that represents the experiential structure of IM phenomenon, as represented in [diagram 6.1, page 303](#). This conceptual IM framework contributes to the small body of empirical studies investigating what IM means, and how it functions as a pragmatic tool for managerial intervention.

Although this is the first phenomenological study to be conducted in the domain field of IM, the elements that emerged as constituting the experiential structure of IM show a considerable amount of overlap with the findings of the previous empirical studies in IM with conventional research approaches, with specific instances of divergence. Such overlap indicates that the methodological exploration of this study was specifically useful in illuminating the ‘lived’ meaning and explicating the experiential structure of IM as described by the participants. In particular, the main invariant features of IM contribute significantly to the current understanding and draw out the complexity of IM as an embodied human management activity that is being experienced in organisational life.

A particular aspect in which the utility of descriptive phenomenology draws out specifically the complexity of IM as an embodied human management activity relate to the understanding of individual needs vis-à-vis organisational needs through employee internal survey, a feature of IM. For instance, the perception that the employee survey is an important ingredient through which to understand the organisation as well as individual needs corroborates a number of IM studies including [Berry, \(1981\)](#) and [Ahmed & Rafiq \(2003\)](#). These studies recognise that employee survey functions as an implicit feature of the cross-functional integrative

process perceived to aid organisations in understanding individual and organisational needs and from such understanding articulate appropriate solution strategies that would deliver ‘value’ expected by the final customer. By demonstrating such effectiveness of internal employee survey, this aspect of the phenomenological findings particularly addresses the issue of how IM can function as an integrative tool, as recently requested by [Ahmed & Rafiq \(2003\)](#).

The findings from this study’s descriptive phenomenological exploration have also refined a number of aspects of other previous IM empirical findings utilising conventional research approach. Such phenomenological findings provide increased and precise understanding of what IM means in terms of what the selected practitioners are saying vis-à-vis the views of academic writers in IM, particularly, as they relate to different constructs generally associated with the IM concept as highlighted below.

### **7.3.1 IM focus on rewards**

From an academic viewpoint, and as seen from much of my discussion in [section 2.13.7](#), a number of quantitative studies (e.g. [Ahmed \*et al.\*, 2003](#); [Gounaris, 2006](#); [2008](#)) investigating IM have linked the construct of reward with IM. This study, as with such previous academic studies found that reward is an invariant feature of the IM phenomenon. This study however goes further to highlight that with IM, reward strategies should be “personalised” in order to produce the “buzz” that makes employees feel special when they are rewarded. Rewards by themselves are indeed meaningful, but when personalised they are able to produce that “extra meaning” that creates a greater sense of motivation and willingness in employees to pursue

organisational goals and go the extra mile for the organisation. This implies a key feature of IM phenomenon, namely, its role to personalise rewards. This could occur in form of surface and deep personalisation, since IM could be used for understanding individual and organisational needs.

Although previous IM studies have highlighted the reward construct as an aspect of IM phenomenon, they have yet to emphasize the above aspect of rewarding, which has emerged because of this study's phenomenological emphasis. Therefore, this study contributes by highlighting this special aspect of "rewarding" in order to get the desired effect of for instance, employee motivation and commitment. These areas certainly present immediate access and opportunities for future research in IM domain field, especially, the pursuit of a combined interpretation of the qualitative and quantitative phenomenological structures of IM. Future research in IM could focus on investigating the particular aspect of personalised reward strategy that motivates employees the most, and to what extent. For instance, it emerged in my study's findings that the impact of personalised reward via 'praise' and 'award' on employee motivation points in the direction of its psychological effect on employees' commitment vis-à-vis their performance. Such connections open up new insights and possibilities for further knowledge use and construction.

### **7.3.2 IM focus on employee training**

Supporting previous quantitative IM studies (e.g. [Ahmed \*et al.\*, 2003](#); [Lings, 2004](#); [Gounaris, 2006; 2008](#)) undertaken from a purely academic standpoint, from a practice perspective, this study found that training constitutes part of IM philosophy. However, this study goes further to highlight that training, in addition to skills development as

an aspect of IM, instils also in employees a ‘sense of confidence’, ‘reassurance’, and ‘satisfaction’ in being able to do the job. This would indicate that in IM, training is not simply about equipping employees with the requisite skills they need in order to undertake their assigned tasks effectively. However, from a practice/experiential point of view, as the findings from this study suggest, with IM, training is a mechanism used to meet both employees’ expectations as well as their emotional needs, as in, for example, boosting employees’ self-confidence whilst they execute their tasks. The previous IM investigations have not picked upon this aspect of training as part of IM strategy.

### **7.3.3 IM focus on management support**

A particular feature of IM phenomenon that comes out of this phenomenological exploration relates to top-management support, which shows top-management support as an invariant IM feature, thus, supporting previous IM studies (see [Bell \*et al.\*, 2004](#)). However, it goes on to show that the nature of top management support within IM places emphasis on giving employees emotional support in addition to conventional management support. Emotional support as a sub-facet of management support has yet to be recognised by previous IM studies that have utilised conventional research approaches and conducted from a purely quantitative and academic viewpoint. This aspect of my finding re-emphasises the point that IM caters not only to the rational aspects of employees, but also addresses their emotional well-being as highlighted in my review of the IM literature.



#### **7.3.4 IM focus on employee commitment**

As with the academic view of IM, a related aspect of the contribution from my phenomenological exploration is my finding on employee commitment. A related aspect of this finding particularly suggests that management must give their commitment to employees in order to attract or receive similar commitment from employees. This would indicate that from practitioners' perspective, IM demands a "reciprocated commitment", which past IM studies have yet to recognise. This aspect of my findings suggests that IM seems to be much more demanding, and indicative that management must give more than, for example, rewards, in order to engender employee *affective* commitment. Thus, unlike the previous prevailing viewpoints within IM on employee commitment, the distinguishing feature of this study's contribution is that commitment within the IM phenomena should be understood as a mutually reinforcing occurrence. In other words, IM espouses and demands a "reciprocated commitment" from both management and employees alike. This is a view that must be taken seriously if managers are to succeed in engendering employee commitment by using IM strategy.

#### **7.3.5 IM focus on empowerment and motivation**

Previous academic studies in IM (e.g. Gounaris, 2006; 2008) have attempted to link the construct of empowerment with employee job satisfaction. However, my phenomenological findings on employee empowerment as an invariant feature of IM do not find any similar equivalent in which to link employee job satisfaction with the element of employee empowerment, as Gounaris (2006) purports. Rather, findings from my phenomenological exploration suggest that in IM, employee empowerment works at the level of creating "self-efficacy." More specifically, my findings suggest

that empowerment is a motivational construct in which “self-efficacy” is found to operate as a key sub-facet of empowerment construct in internal markets. This is a contribution specific to the IM domain field of study. Previous IM studies have yet to recognise this practitioners’ view of empowerment as a feature of IM phenomenon.

In addition, the suggestion that IM looks at not just factors that motivate employees, but also demotivates, throws up new insights for future research. Within this, future IM investigation could consider the possibility of moving away from the heavy focus of IM on motivation to consider “demotivation” factors. This is because it emerged from my phenomenological exploration that having fewer factors that cause motivation might not necessarily lead to demotivation. This study highlights this fact, and constitutes another element of contribution.

#### **7.4 Broad contributions from the utility of descriptive phenomenology**

Given the fact that IM’s definition remains elusive after more than three decades of study, the description of IM structure at the general level following my phenomenological analysis illuminates and provides a rich depth of analysis from which to pursue the idea of IM from a holistic lens and with a more defined focus. For instance, the phenomenological description of IM at the general level shows that IM involves a number of internal management activities namely, employee training, understanding the organisation, managerial support, empowerment, reward, commitment and internal communication. Such a description provides greater specificity and comprehension of how practitioners perceive IM. From within such a lens it can become possible to derive a framework of how IM can be developed into the future as a rigorous academic research construct and management activity.

This study's findings, besides providing specificity and comprehension of what IM means, the invariant features that emerged to constitute the IM structure, certainly offer a source for developing a measurement construct. However, whilst such invariant features satisfy the overall aim of this study, further inquiry is needed to further check and refine such features. For example, a study utilising statistical procedures can investigate the validity and reliability of the defined invariant features of IM in constituting a research construct that can be used for investigating the role and impact of IM on employee and organisational performance<sup>27</sup>.

The research method of this study has also opened scope for further studies to follow in a similar view, i.e. explore IM through the lens of interpretive phenomenology into the future. Until now, most IM studies have predominantly focused on the adoption of IM by organisations, whether IM's application in organisation was right or wrong, and how the implementation of IM could lead to organisational effectiveness and eventually, to business performance. Such efforts have only created schism and fragmented academic research activity within this field of study. However, what constitutes the experiential structure of IM as a distinct human management activity has largely been neglected in empirical IM research. The provision of an understanding of the experiential structure of IM through the analysis of the experiences of practitioners implementing IM in their organisations enriches the sustainability of IM as an on-going organisational practice, and enhances the understanding of its complexity as a theoretical concept.

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<sup>27</sup> It is being suggested here that a quantitative research methodology may show the causal effects/relationships of the emergent features that constitute the IM structure and consequently, the level of impact such features may have on IM implementation in organisations. Such research approach is likely to show the impact of for instance, praise and award as "personalised" reward tools that could be used to influence employee performance, and ultimately, business performance in statistical terminologies.

More broadly, the findings from this study highlight the existence and awareness of IM as an on-going management activity in different business sectors, albeit, with varying degrees and nuances of understanding and application. In highlighting such awareness and practitioners' perceptions of IM across different business sectors, this study has through the lens of those practitioners implementing IM in their organisations 1) provided evidence in support of the existence in practice of a phenomenon referred to as IM, 2) examined what this IM phenomenon constitutes and how it is experienced by those practitioners implementing it in their organisations, and 3) provided the knowledge of IM's basic constituent elements, e.g. top-management support, reward and commitment. These elements allow for a more rigorous construct development, especially, with regard to the sub-facets of "emotional support", "personalised rewards" and "reciprocated commitment", which underpin the nuanced understanding and application of IM philosophy.

### **7.5 Contributions in relation to the wider body of knowledge to which IM relates**

This study has made significant contributions by delineating the understanding of IM domain field in relation to the wider body of knowledge to which it relates, such as, services marketing, HRM, and organisational behaviour. There is some overlap between the content of IM and such wider body of knowledge, hence, the criticism (e.g. Hales, 1999) that there is no such thing as IM, especially from the perspective of HRM. For instance, from an HRM perspective, major disagreements stem from the fact that constructs, such as, training, reward, empowerment, motivation, and commitment are used prominently in describing the key dimensions of IM function. Despite criticism of IM from HRM proponents this study has shown through descriptive phenomenological analysis the existence of IM in the world of practice,

and gone onto define its domain elements. Additionally, this study's findings have helped to delineate in a number of ways how/why IM is different from other domain of management, such as, HRM, along those key dimensions.

For example, in relation to reward, this study found that IM is used to personalise reward strategies in order to produce the psychological “connection to the organisation” which gives employees that ‘extra meaning’ that makes them feel motivated and committed when they are rewarded. In other words, the key feature of IM in relation to reward is its role to personalise rewards. Secondly, in relation to commitment, this study found that IM demands a “reciprocated commitment” from both management and employees. In other words, in IM, management must give their commitment to employees in order to attract *affective* commitment from employees. The emphasis on ‘reciprocated commitment’ particularly delineates the specific nuance of IM's philosophy as non-exploitative in contrast to HRM strategy, which tends to often dangle the carrot of rewards, and simply ask employees to give their commitment.

Thirdly, although HRM studies (e.g. Hales, 1994) examining IM as well as IM studies highlight the role of employee training as skills development, this study goes further. It shows that training as an aspect of IM instils in employees a ‘sense of confidence’ and ‘reassurance’ in being able to do their jobs. This is indicative of the philosophical stance of IM that differentiates it from HRM with regard to the notion of training. For instance, from an HRM perspective, Hales (1994, p.57) identifies that training is used “to shape attitudes”, “impart technical skills”, and “to emphasise understanding of service strategies and development of interpersonal communication and marketing

skills.” All of these are suggestive of rational agency and unit of action. In contrast, this study’s findings show that IM’s focus on training is not simply one of addressing the skills needs of employees as explicit, rational beings, but also focuses on their psychological and emotional well-being. This implies that IM propounds a shift away from the traditional focus of treating employees simply as rational entities but requires organisations to consider them from a rounded viewpoint.

Fourthly, it emerged from my phenomenological finding that ‘self-efficacy’ belief is central to the idea of employee empowerment in IM. Again, from an HRM perspective, [Hales \(1994, p.59\)](#) identifies that empowerment operates at the level of “delegation of responsibility”, which entails superior others giving employees the knowledge, skills and responsibility to operate in “discretionary ways.” This view negates IM’s philosophical stance in relation to employee empowerment. The findings from this study have shown that, in IM, empowerment functions as a motivational construct in which all employees are enabled through information and knowledge sharing to exercise freedom or certain degree of discretion in taking responsibilities and decisions affecting their jobs, rather than simply functioning as delegates or representatives of a formal authority or a senior manager, as [Hales \(1994\)](#) advocates.

This would imply that the related aspect of employee motivation that emerged as a subfacet of empowerment in this study’s findings is self-generated and self-regulated, and sustained in relation to anticipated outcomes that lean often towards positive and successful accomplishments. In this sense, therefore, the notion of self-efficacy belief as central to empowerment in IM can be understood as the individual’s belief in him or herself about his or her capabilities to achieve designated levels of performance in a

way that such individual's choices are influenced by the outcomes of his or her own achievement. However, the findings from this study do not find any equivalent to suggest that IM is used to attract or retain employees, as some IM scholars (e.g. George, 1990; Collins & Payne, 1991; Berry & Parasuraman, 1991) claim. This would corroborate the views of critics, such as, Hales (1994) who argue that IM has no such implications for HRM functions.

It also emerged from my findings that individuals experiencing IM were not described as 'internal customers', as contested by some HRM studies (e.g. Hales, 1994) examining IM. From an IM practice perspective, this aspect of my findings shed light on the contention (e.g. Mudie, 2003) that employees cannot simply be described as 'internal customers.' However, whilst the term "internal customer" does not surface, the study does identify exchanges between employees that are described as 'interactive' and occurring at interpersonal and departmental levels across geographical borders. Thus, this particular finding supports the uncontested academic notion within IM studies that interactive marketing and relational networks constitute a central feature of IM philosophy.

The findings emerging from this study also support the notion that through employee surveys IM shapes organisational culture and influences corporate identity by creating a climate of change in the nature of mutual relationships and fostering open communication between individuals and across departmental boundaries. This aspect of my findings presents an additional lens through which to understand IM's role in shaping behavioural patterns in organisations in terms of its association with organisational behaviour.

Overall, as can be seen from the foregoing, adopting the descriptive phenomenological research approach by examining IM from a practitioner viewpoint, has in different ways corroborated, repudiated, and in some cases, extended existing research outcomes in IM domain field. This study's phenomenological frame to understand the practice of IM constitutes a significant contribution to knowledge in the domain field of this study. It also opens up access for future studies in IM to follow methodological approach in attempting to uncover as well as check the emergent experiential IM themes and their underlying essences.

### **7.6 Academic and practice implications**

The implications of this study are multi-faceted, and relate to both academic research and managerial practices. First, this study highlights the fact that IM is simply not internal communication, information dissemination mechanism or marketing the company's products to employees as previously understood by some academics and practitioners. Ensuring effective and successful IM programmes across the organisation requires more than viewing it as internal communication and as an information dissemination mechanism. Through a systematic empirical process, this study has identified nine elements that constitute the structure of IM and which must be borne in mind, especially by managers. They are internal communication, employee training, top management support, employee motivation, reward, inter-departmental co-ordination, commitment, understanding the organisation and employee empowerment.

An underlying implication of this study for managers is the need to personalise their rewards whilst empowering their employees. There is a perception that empowered employees are likely the more efficient and effective, whilst organisations in turn,



benefit when customers feel that they have been served in an effective and timely fashion as a result of employee empowerment. However, underlying the issue of employee empowerment within the context of this study's findings is the fact that managers must seek to encourage an individual's belief in his or her own personal efficacy to achieve desired results, rather than having a superior simply share or designate authority to a subordinate.

Another aspect that top managers need to pay close attention to is the benefit organisations could derive by providing their employees emotional support when necessary. Top-level managers could provide such support by making the time to listen to employees' personal concerns and views, and taking into consideration such views and concerns at the strategic level thinking. By providing such a level of support, managers can identify individual needs, and by satisfying such needs, they have in turn, employees who are genuinely committed to do well for the organisation. However, managers must give or demonstrate their commitment to employees' concerns in order to attract the employees' equivalent of such commitment. This is a view that must be taken seriously if organisations are to be successful in reaping IM benefits as well as to avoid having misguided notions about generating employee commitment, which is perceived as one of the important benefits from IM implementation.

Managers need to be aware that efforts in IM implementation require employee empowerment and motivation, effective internal communication between departments and across the organisation and personalising employees' rewards, all of which eventually lead to beneficial IM outcomes, such as, employee commitment. Therefore,

neglecting or partially implementing IM programmes is likely to result into the absence of such benefits as demonstrated in this study's findings. Finally, a far more important challenge for managers arises from the need to pay greater attention to their IM implementation by ensuring that IM efforts are successfully directed towards improving individual capabilities and organisational competencies. Improving individual capabilities would eventually lead to the utilisation of such capabilities for building organisational competencies and ultimately, the delivery of external marketplace promises. Lack of such focus in implementing this facet of IM may likely lead to drained internal resources, and inevitably result in the loss of both human and material resources for the organisation.

## **7.7 Limitations of this study**

Several points regarding the current study need to be borne in mind when considering the findings and the study as a whole. Such points constitute the limitations of this study, and are drawn from the key perspectives of generalisability and methodological considerations.

### **7.7.1 Methodological considerations**

Firstly, although the sample of eight participants provided rich data appropriate for this study's phenomenological focus, the phenomenological method of *epoche* i.e. bracketing of one's prior knowledge of the object of investigation was difficult and can be considered as a limitation. It was difficult to ascertain accurately beyond reasonable doubt, even after I had suspended my prior theoretical knowledge of IM, that my theoretical biases have not inadvertently influenced the disciplinary

transformations that eventually emerged to represent the elements that constitute the structure of IM.

Secondly, only one aspect of the phenomenological process i.e. qualitative descriptive phenomenology has been utilised in this study. Therefore, because such aspect has tended to display strict adherence and bias towards Giorgi's phenomenological research praxis, it is likely that certain aspects of my findings bind me to a one eye-view. Perhaps, this study could have benefitted from a combination of other methods of well-known measures of validity, such as, triangulation. However, as elaborated under [section 3.7](#), the criteria for understanding validity in descriptive phenomenological research method supported my findings given the contested hallmarks of the reliability and the validity issues facing the qualitative research inquiry. In other words, although this study's bias towards the descriptive phenomenological analytical procedures is strong and robust, they do not in themselves, represent a generic view outside the paradigm of descriptive phenomenology.

### **7.7.2 Generalisation of the study's findings**

The generalisability of my phenomenological findings is limited to the experiences of individuals employed for this study, and by implication, the private and public sector businesses within the UK as represented by the organisations of such individuals. Therefore, this means that this study's findings may differ in another geographical context and may be less relevant to a larger sample drawn from different or across multiple countries. In order to generalise the relevance of my findings beyond the current sample and their contextual boundaries, a similar study may need to be

conducted in private and public sector establishments beyond the UK geographical boundary. This will be useful in determining if the findings from this study differ significantly in different contexts and industries. Such future studies are required before the generalisation of my phenomenological findings can boast of any universal appeal and acceptance beyond the business sectors and geographical boundary they relate.

### **7.8 Recommendations for future research**

By pioneering the phenomenology of IM, this study has opened scope for exploring new research possibilities, especially, future studies keen on examining further the operating dynamics or the invariant features that emerged to constitute the IM phenomenon. The focus of such future studies can be considered either from a methodological standpoint or from the substantive findings of this study:

- a. The current study has focused only on individuals with whom the experience of IM is salient within the UK private sector, particularly the financial services, manufacturing, mobile-telecommunications, as well as the public sector marketing and tourism. Future research in IM could extend IM investigation by considering the relevance of my findings in other countries, especially, across the Atlantic. Apart from the possibility that my findings would benefit through the convergence and/or divergence of ideas from such cross-cultural research focus, the emergent IM structure indeed provides a valid starting point to consolidate the findings of such focus of investigation. In this sense, it would be useful to utilize my proposed IM structure to develop conceptually such study's frame and focus in perhaps, comparing studies between such geographical contexts and the UK.

- b. It would also be of interest to explore further, via a quantitative mechanism, the degree of overlap between the dynamics or invariant features that emerged in this study's findings to constitute the IM structure. In such sense, for instance, the impact of employee training and employee commitment as invariant IM features on employees cum organisational effectiveness could become more obvious, acutely established and measurable. The conceptual IM structure in this study only shows partial interactions between the invariant features that constitute the IM phenomenon. For example, future research could consider possibly utilizing multiple measures or statistical means of assessment in establishing the perceived causalities between 'praise' and/or 'award', which are the personalised features of reward strategy suggested to exert a certain positive and powerful influence on employee motivation, commitment and job performance.
- c. Also of significance is using the features or the elements that constitute the proposed IM structure as a frame to develop an IM construct. Such a construct could then be used to test other constructs, e.g. trust, that were found to relate to IM, but were not addressed in this study. The notion of 'trust' as an organisational imperative/construct arising from implementing IM initiatives has not received attention in the domain field of IM research, although there is a tacit support to consider its relevance (See, [Ahmed & Rafiq, 2003](#)). Following from such focus of investigation is the possibility that more insights could emerge to reveal nuanced instances of those managerial actions, which employees may be more and/or less inclined to trust, given the effect top management support as a feature of IM phenomenon is perceived to have on employees' attitudes and behavioural patterns within the organisation.

## **7.9 Concluding remarks**

A major distinguishing feature of this study is its contribution towards a more in-depth understanding of the IM phenomenon and the provision of evidence in support of the existence of IM in practice through the phenomenological analysis of the experiences of individuals implementing IM is their world of work. Within this derives a more in-depth knowledge and understanding of the complexity of IM phenomenon in terms of delineating how its domain field differs from the wider body of knowledge, such as, HRM, with which it shares association.

Whilst previous studies have only investigated IM adoption at organisational levels, this study has pioneered an inclusive study incorporating the ‘voice’ of practitioners in the domain field of study. Although no such IM study had previously been conducted, based on my phenomenological findings vis-à-vis the findings from existing IM studies with conventional research approaches, an empirical representation of what constitutes the IM structure was devised. The structure of IM includes internal communication, employee training, top-management support, commitment, rewards, interdepartmental co-ordination, employee motivation, employee empowerment and understanding the organisation. In other words, the constituent structure of IM should have these elements. In particular, the elements should emphasize the sub-facets, e.g. under commitment, the facet of interest to IM is affective commitment as opposed to normative or continuance commitment.

The limitations of this study mainly relate to the restriction within the qualitative methodological frame adopted. Recommendations for future research are provided mainly based on the study’s findings, whilst considering its limitations. Issues emerging from this study have implications for both academic research and

managerial practices. From the academic standpoint, this study has provided an empirical basis upon which to pursue a quantitative study in IM operationalisation. Since this study establishes what constitutes the structure of IM by examining the perceptions of practitioners implementing IM in response to the major focus of academic debate (see, for example, Ahmed & Rafiq 2000; 2003; Schultz, 2004; 2006) in the field of study. The managerial implications are more in terms of suggestions as to how managers and organisations can re-examine their IM implementation along each of the key dimensions identified. For instance, ensuring that there is face-to-face and two-way internal communications, employee training, empowerment and proper dissemination of information throughout the organisation so that both individuals and organisations can benefit from such inclusive IM practice.

In conclusion, IM must not be viewed as a short-term solution and/or strategy to dealing with the problems of lack of internal communication within the organisation, neither must it be misinterpreted as marketing the company's products to employees. Rather, IM should be employed as a long-term process of integrating individual needs and goals with the strategic needs and goals of the organisation. This view of IM is more likely to strengthen and sustain individual distinctive capabilities and organisational competencies that consequently lead to mutual benefits and higher performance outcomes for the organisation.

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## **Appendix One**

### **‘Lebenswelt’ or the ‘life world’**

The earlier Husserlian phenomenological perspective was criticised by the existential-phenomenologists, such as, [Heidegger \(1927/1962\)](#) and [Merleau-Ponty \(1962\)](#). They argue that the notion of suspending one’s (*a priori*) knowledge of a phenomenon was ‘idealistic’. Consequently, they began to move away from Husserlian philosophical notion, which focuses on consciousness and essences towards elaborating existential and hermeneutic (interpretive) phenomenological dimensions. In response, [Husserl \(1926\)](#) devised the idea of the ‘life world’ in an attempt to embrace the divergence from transcendental phenomenology. The ‘life world’ comprises of the phenomenon around us as I perceive them. It is pre-reflective, i.e. it occurs prior to my reflection and before I put it into language. Husserl’s notion of the “life world” focuses on demonstrating that phenomenon (experience) exists in a day-to-day world that is filled with complex meanings, which form the backdrop of my everyday actions and interactions.

[Eckartsberg \(1998a\)](#) notes that the ‘life world’ is an attempt to direct attention to the individual’s lived situation and social world, rather than some inner world of introspection. The ‘life world’ is the centre of interaction between individuals and their perceptual environments as well as the world of experienced horizons in which individuals derive meanings ([Polkinghorne, 1989](#)). Although Husserl’s critics (e.g. [Heidegger 1927/1962](#); [Merleau-Ponty 1962](#)) are credited with provoking the idea of the ‘life world’ as a strong phenomenological movement, Husserl’s concept of the ‘life world’ is nevertheless, widely recognised to have given impetus to other variants

of phenomenology. Such variants include existential-phenomenology and hermeneutic-phenomenology, which are espoused by his critics. Ehrich, (2003, p.51) points out that “while the *Lebenswelt* marked a shift in Husserl’s thinking, both the hermeneutic and existential phenomenologists built upon this idea and focused attention on being-in-the-world.”

Existential-phenomenology entails “the application of the phenomenological method to the perennial problems of human existence” (Eckartsberg, 1998a, p.8). It is concerned with describing and interpreting “the world as I find it, prior to any explicit theoretical conceptions” (Eckartsberg, 1998a, p.4). Existential-phenomenology focuses on “expreiation” (Eckartsberg, 1998a, p.4), i.e. interpreting everyday life experiences and actions, which Husserl (1962) metaphorically describes as the ‘life world’. Hermeneutic-phenomenology focuses on interpreting everyday experiences in order to create human awareness (van Manen, 1990). Both existential-phenomenology and hermeneutic-phenomenology emphasize the need to move from mere descriptions of the conscious experience to the interpretations that elude us in the process of evolving meaning.

In general, whilst the aim of descriptive phenomenology is to describe my everyday world as I experience it, other variants of phenomenology highlight different dimensions in which to describe such experiences (Eckartsberg, 1998a). Such variations have consequently led to two schools of phenomenology – ‘descriptive’ and ‘interpretive’, which emerged to represent how much emphasis the researcher wishes to place on (the phenomenon) existential issues. According to Eckartsberg (1998a), descriptive phenomenology as developed by Husserl emphasizes the description of the

meaning of a phenomenon, whilst interpretive phenomenology paved the way for explicating and interpreting phenomenal meanings.

## Appendix Two

### Steps in the analysis of transformed meaning units into disciplinary language - Participant 1.

*Note \* indicates that the investigator's question has been incorporated in the transformation*

<p>I. In as much detail as possible can you describe a situation in which internal marketing has occurred for you?</p> <p>P1: Yes, I can. The key one will be the internal communications project I call it that I've just started working on. Now, I need to give some background perhaps so that you know for your research how this came about. Originally, small project was given to a student who was working at Filtermist, as part of, he was working in my manufacturing department and he has to do a mini project on a number of aspects./ His boss, the operations director says everyone was complaining no one was communicating with each other, so do a project on internal communications. So he did few interviews with people and came up with some results in the project.</p>	<p>1. * P1 asserts he could recall a situation in which internal marketing has occurred for him by citing the internal communication project which his company has recently undertaken. P1 starts by providing a background to the project in order to give an idea of how his IM experience began. P1 states that originally, a student attached to the manufacturing department of his company was mandated by his boss, the operations director to do a small project on a number of issues including internal communication since most employees in the department were complaining of lack of internal communication. P1 then says that the student began by conducting few interviews amongst employees before coming up with some findings.</p>
<p>2. Some of the findings were good, but having worked in the business a lot longer, I realised that some of the responses he has got were probably false, because they didn't understand why he was asking these questions and they didn't want to give true answers in case he got back to the directors. So they weren't necessarily giving the correct answers because they were scared that if they gave the right answers he might get back to the directors and they get in trouble.</p>	<p>2. P1 states that some of the findings from the mini project conducted by the student were useful. Nevertheless, P1 asserts that from his experience of having been working in the company longer than the student he realised that some of the issues uncovered did not exactly capture the issues facing the company. P1 then blames employees' false responses for some of the inaccurate findings, and attributes such to the fact that respondents had no knowledge as to why the student was asked to conduct such internal survey in the first place. P1 says because respondents lacked such knowledge, they therefore offered incorrect responses to avoid getting into trouble in case their responses were presented to the directors of the company.</p>
<p>3. But anyway, it helped us though, because the directors took his report and then took three of us, heads of each department or in effect, the most experienced in each department. That is myself, and two other women in the business, and said, here is this report, and then gave us a list of other questions to go with it. And said, here is the project, go away and do this.</p>	<p>3. P1 nonetheless affirms that the findings from the student's report were in some sense useful, as it informed the basis upon which a decision was reached by the directors of the company, who requested that P1 and the heads of other departments in the company carry out a thorough survey.</p>
<p>4. So I had to read the original report I looked through, I said well, it's missing things, or this is wrong. So, what I did was I went out and re-interviewed people, and asked them, people that I knew who would give us honest answers because I told them why I were doing it. I said that nothing will go back to the directors, it was all anonymous, so they could say what they wanted.</p>	<p>4. However, P1 states that after they had examined the student's findings, they decided to conduct another employee interview since the student's findings did not exactly address the key issues affecting the business. P1 states that they approached employees, who they believed would provide honest responses regarding the issues raised in the survey. P1 asserts that this time they</p>

And so I got a list of issues, and it all got to do with why problems occur in the business in terms of all the processing flow. The key thing that came up was just the communications between departments who was responsible for what department.	informed such respondents as to the purpose of the survey as well as the anonymity of the survey. P1's perception was that such an approach would instil greater confidence in such an exercise as well as the freedom for people to express their views without fear of victimisation. The result was that they got a list of responses that actually reflect why problems were occurring in the business in terms of the internal processes within the business. P1 affirms that the major issue that came out from the second interview was the absence of communication between departments, especially, their various responsibilities.
5. I didn't even know the true management tree as to which person was in charge of which other person. So that was an issue amongst staff members, nobody knew who their boss was, and this is a business of 45 people.	5. P1 states that they actually realised from conducting the survey that employees lacked knowledge of the management structure within the company in terms of their individual responsibilities towards one another. He asserts that such lack of knowledge amongst them was an issue affecting the business, as it was difficult amongst the staff to understand who their managers were in a business of forty-five people.
6. Anyway I did this project and I actually decided to, I sectioned it all down and I came up with a number of different issues within the business that needs addressing in each department. So, just getting together as a whole, it was a member of the sales, a member of the accounts, a member of the purchasing, he was there for the manufacturing side of the business. In effect, I had someone who was representing every side of the business.	6. P1 however, reiterated that the team identified a number of salient issues that have arisen from the survey, which affect the business as a whole, before they linked such issues in relation to how they affect each department. P1 perceives that having got together was useful, as the team that conducted the survey comprised of individuals from all sides of the business including manufacturing, purchasing, sales and finance.
7. And for the first few meetings that I had, I actually ironed out a few little minor issues, which weren't part of the project but it's just been bugging us for the past, probably a few years. And just by talking to each other, I realised how many issues that could be easily solved. But in the past, no body had done it because the directors hadn't been bothered or just didn't think it was important. And it's really from then on I got motivated, that by being able to solving those minor issues just from sitting down round the table before the project had ever even started. And I suddenly go wow! think of what I could do here.	7. P1 states that they had series of initial meetings that provided them with the opportunity to discuss and settle minor issues, which although were not part of the survey itself, have been a source of major concern to them in the past. P1 expressed surprise from realising how easily issues could be resolved between departments just by communicating with each other. He recalls that it was never the case in the past given that the directors of the company did not make an effort to highlight the importance of such communication. P1 then says that they got motivated from being the discretion to resolve issues between them, which provided the team with an even greater motivation to deliberate on the issues that have arisen from the survey.
8. And to start off with the report, I did sort of a mini SWOT, as in not the real SWOT analysis, but I just did a mini version of it, and came up with these ideas on how I could improve things, how the departments could communicate between each other. I've recently presented it to the board of directors, and they are considering it. But they've told us since they are wanting to go ahead with the majority of it, they just need to check through certain things. Because some the things that I suggested cost money, and they are sort of weighing things up in terms of cost benefits	8. P1 states that they commenced discussion on the issues uncovered from the survey (experience) with some sort of internal appraisal before articulating different ideas on how the different departments communicate with each other. P1 asserts that they have presented the board of directors with their ideas, which are being considered with a view to their implementation. Although, P1 affirms that the directors would need to review their ideas given their financial implications before their implementation.

obviously.	
9. But I think the key aspect of it was that each department is now talking to each other. Because the key thing I suddenly realised was that I need to communicate better within the business, and I have to sort out my lines of communication so I know who I should talk to, and then they would talk to the other person. I know although it sounds longwinded, what I've found is that it should be the directors speak to the directors, the directors then speak to the heads of their departments, the department heads then speak to each other or to their directors, and then they can disseminate information down the train. In effect, it's how to disseminate the information all the way to the bottom of the business so that everyone gets involved with what I'm aiming for.	9. P1 affirms that the key outcome of the experience is that communication between departments within the business improved, as they have realised amongst themselves that they must communicate better as well as streamline the channels of communication within the business so that employees can better relate with each other. P1 admits that although his view of how such channels of communication can be streamlined seems to be unclear, he nonetheless asserts that what they realised was that before communication can be effective within the business, it has to involve every member of the organisation. This includes the dissemination of information from directors of the company all the way down to the bottom of the chain in a way that everyone gets involved.
10. Simple situations whereby I have problems with dispatch of goods not going out in their correct packaging, it was found it was because they've never been told what the correct packaging was. When I investigated why don't they know, it was because there was no procedure, nobody really knew whose job it was to train them, and so, it was no wonder that they would get things wrong, because, it put holes everywhere.	10. P1 recalls ordinary situations in which dispatch goods were packaged wrongly, and attributes such wrong packaging to employees' lack of knowledge of the proper packaging procedure. P1 states that upon investigation as to why employees lacked such information, they realised that proper procedures and training were not in place. P1 attributes such lack to the fact that no one knew whose responsibility it was to provide employees with such training, which in P1's perception explains why those employees got the packaging wrong.
11. Really, it opened a can of worms this project did, and it's gonna be a huge project to keep going. But the start of it, and the key aspect of this project, although I called it internal communications, could be argued as being internal marketing, is the lines of communication, how to disseminate the information down to everybody about the business as a whole. And so everything I've discussed is centred around this communication aspect and I realised I all need to go away to my own departments, look at the training, look at who is responsible for what, ensure that people are informed about what is going on in the business, what I'm actually trying to achieve, what products I'm building.	11. P1 affirms that the experience did uncover other complex problems affecting the business, and will definitely be a huge project to sustain. He perceives the major aspect of the experience to be internal marketing although in his company, it was misinterpreted as internal communication. This is because, as P1 asserts, the experience involves how to disseminate information across the business as a whole. P1 reiterates that the focus of the experience was how to ensure effective internal communication within the business. He admits as heads of various departments, they realised the need to each address the issue of training and individual responsibilities in their respective departments, as well as ensure that everyone in the business is aware of the objectives of the business in terms of its aims, and product offerings.
12. One of the aspects that was brought up is that, I'm building on this project in the hearts of the people that don't even know what they do. All products I'm making I should actually train them on that. So one of the aspects the project is come up with, that I need to get a better training system in place, so that I know everybody knows not just their jobs, but that they've got an idea of the business, what I do, who are customers are, and to understand really what are customers want from us.	12. P1 states that one of the issues highlighted as a result of the experience was the fact that employees lack knowledge of the product the company offers. P1 emphasizes that employees should actually be trained to understand all the products the company offers. Therefore, one of the proposals from the experience is to ensure that there is in place a proper training system within the business, so that everyone can understand not just the demands of their jobs, but also an idea of the overall business, the customers, as well as their needs.



<p>13. Some of the issues I've had in the past, I mean quality issues where stuffs have gone out wrong, and the customers have phoned up complaining, and I need to understand the customer why he finds that annoying, and why that has made it a problem for him instead of the directors just coming down and shouting at people saying get! it right. They need to understand what they've done wrong, why the customer is actually upset about it, so that they actually empathise with the customer. I mean that's something that I need to do, or try and do, which is, I mean it's a very difficult task because one of the guys that's working there, they really arguably perhaps, aren't bothered. They just come in, they wanna do a job, and then go home.</p>	<p>13. P1 recalls the quality problems the company has encountered in the past in which goods dispatched with the wrong packaging resulted in customer complaints. P1 perceives that employees need to understand why the customer was unhappy and why such quality issues were a problem for the customer rather than the directors of the company demanding that such problems be rectified. P1 states that employees should be sensitised to what they have done wrong, why the customer was unhappy about such wrong packaging, so that employees can empathise with the customer. P1 reemphasizes that sensitising employees to quality issues and the effect it might have on the customer was a challenge the company need to focus upon. P1 however, admits that achieving such challenge is difficult given perhaps, the low employee morale.</p>
<p>14. So hopefully, it's gonna be a massive cultural change for us to actually do this, as I have described to the directors they need to change as well, because as I have learnt in my past studies, for culture to change in the business it has to come from the top, otherwise it's not gonna happen. So it's quite an exciting time really. As I say, this is where, I call it internal communications but another phrase for it would be internal marketing, and this is what I've done, and I're really working towards.</p>	<p>14. P1 perceives that accomplishing the issues arising from the experience would entail a dramatic cultural change for the company, as the team has drawn the attention of the directors to the fact that they need to change as well. P1recollects as a student, he learnt that for culture to change within an organisation there has to be a top-bottom approach to bringing about such change, otherwise, it is unlikely to succeed. Thus, revealing that P1 is aware of the organisational reality in which top-level managers are perceived to have the right kind of authority to initiate and sustain change within an organisation. He feels enthusiastic about the company's new direction, and reiterates the fact that although the experience was being misinterpreted as internal communication in his company, that it was actually internal marketing and affirms that was what the company has done and working towards.</p>
<p>15. As I have said before to you, a lot of it is common sense. If you get people involved, then they are actually gonna appreciate, and to actually try to understand what they are doing, instead of just being given an instruction and not understanding why they are doing it. The idea is that eventually people understand where everybody is, and they understand other departments' needs as well. Sales have got to understand that they can't just ask production for a unit to be built tomorrow, because if production have to drop everything for that one unit, that means somebody else is gonna have to do ten units, it's gonna get pulled back as well, so sales has got to understand production. And production has got to understand that sales aren't pressuring them to annoy them but because their customers wanted the goods quickly and so on. And accounts again, they need to be aware of how I're trying to do business, and the cash flow and all that sort of thing, it's all getting everybody involved.</p>	<p>15. P1 reaffirms that the experience entails the ability to make sensible decisions and that if employees are involved in what the company aims to achieve, they will appreciate and actually strive to understand their individual roles within the business. Rather than employees simply being coerced to do something without first making them understand the reasons as to why they are being asked to do such. P1's perception was that eventually employees would understand the responsibilities of other colleagues as well as the needs of other departments. P1 elaborates that sales department, for instance, need to understand the limitations in the production department before making demands of them. On the other hand, the production department needs to appreciate that the sales department is aiming to satisfy the external customer. Just as the accounts department need to be aware of the cash flow needs of the business in order to provide the right level of financial support across the board. P1 reiterates that the key aim of the whole experience is to get everyone to be involved in what is going</p>

	on within the company.
16. This is the starting point because the directors have got to understand that they are looking to set up this middle management team, which is quite ironic in a way, because all you tend to hear about these days is middle management team is actually being erased, and being taken out of the equation. Well, what I're looking at is actually putting them back in, because they can then look after day-to-day running of the business. They can talk to each other,	16. P1 asserts that the directors need to understand first that they are aiming to establish a middle-level management team, which in P1's view is ironic given that the industry normal practice is to level the middle level management. P1 asserts that they are aiming to strengthen and empower middle level managers in order to enable such managers to concentrate on running the day-to-day aspect of the business and to communicate with each other.
17. one of the aspects of this project is to have regular communications meetings between the management heads so that I can discuss issues that have come up, and then I intend going back to my teams to tell them what's been discussed. Although it sounds like it's just going to be just meetings, but as long as they are done properly, it would mean that people get the information through them.	17. P1 indicates that one of the aims of the experience is to maintain regular meetings between the management heads in order to enable them to have discussion on the issues affecting the business, and to disseminate the issues arising from such discussion to their various employee teams. He admits that although the whole exercise might be perceived as just meetings, he however, asserts that if such meetings are well managed, then it could mean that employees can receive information through such meetings.
What part of that experience would you consider internal marketing?	18. * When asked by the investigator which part of the experience would be considered as internal marketing, P1 asserts that the entire experience constitutes for him the whole idea of internal marketing.
18. I say I would all. I really would, because it's all parts and particle.	
19. I mean the key bit is the communication side, I keep calling it internal communications. Internal marketing is all about communicating to people and getting people to understand this thing about issues, the whole idea is to get them to have the company running more efficiently, and keep providing a better service to the customer. At the end of the day, it's got to be a point to it all.	19. P1 indicates that the key area of the experience was the communication aspect, which he says, they keep referring to as internal communication in his company. He asserts that internal marketing is all about communication and the dissemination of information, as well as creating awareness amongst people within the business in order to improve efficiency and create customer value. P1 admits that ensuring customer value is the major focus of the business.
20. It's all very well keeping people informed, but if that doesn't actually help improve the service then sometimes you don't always get to the point. So all of this is gonna come down to keeping the internal people involved to understand what they're doing.	20. P1 states that although keeping employees informed is important, he however, perceives that if such process does not enhance or improve customer service, then the business may not always achieve its overall objectives. In his view, internal marketing is simply keeping employees and individuals within the business involved with key strategic issues in order to ensure that they have adequate knowledge and understanding of their responsibilities.
21. Focus is got to be on giving a better customer service, I should have drawn from the quality issues I've talked about before, less packing problems, because people know how to pack in which box so that the customer is not gonna complain. I would say so far, it's all internal marketing.	21. P1 asserts that the main objective would be to provide a better customer service, whilst recalling the quality issue he had earlier mentioned, which arose from poor packaging. P1 reaffirms that if employees had understood what the correct packaging procedures were, then that might helped to prevent customer complaints. P1 however, asserts that everything he had described so far constitutes his experience of internal marketing.
22. My view of internal marketing, forget what the theories are, is to keep people within the business involved and to ensure that everybody	22. * When asked by the investigator to clarify his view of internal marketing, P1 explicitly states that apart from the theoretical assumptions

<p>knows what's there, and ensure everybody knows what their role is within that business, so that they know what they are trying to achieve, and that's what it's all about, so that people are not kept in the dark, and they are going out there with more knowledge. So it's easier for one to operate because you understand where other departments are coming from. You understand their limitations, their issues so you can work between it. Instead of you being non-linked department fighting each other which I've spoken before.</p>	<p>associated with internal marketing. For him, internal marketing is keeping employees within the business involved and ensuring that they understand the business as well as their responsibilities within the business in order to understand what the business is aiming to achieve. P1 also states that employee involvement requires that employees are informed and provided with more knowledge, in a way that it easier for them to recognise and understand other the limitations of other departments in order to ensure effective coordination within the business. Rather than the departments operating independently and having conflicts with each other, which he had earlier mentioned.</p>
<p>23. So the internal marketing is just communications between each department as to what is happening.</p>	<p>23. P1 asserts that internal marketing is simply ensuring there is communication between departments regarding the activities within the business.</p>

## Appendix Three

### Steps in the analysis of transformed meaning units into disciplinary language - Participant 2.

*Note \* indicates that the investigator's question has been incorporated in the transformation*

<p>1. In as much detail as possible can you describe a situation in which internal marketing has occurred for you?</p> <p>P2: These are instances where companies use a lot of tools. Let me say Nokia tends to communicate to me, they are sharing information with me, they're using webcast for that or emails, PowerPoint presentations. If it comes down via management line, I get my information.</p>	<p>1. * P2 when asked by the investigator to describe his experience of IM first designates IM as instances in which organisations use many tools. P2 states, for instance, that his organisation tends to use various tools, such as, webcast, emails and PowerPoint presentations to communicate and share information with him. P2 indicates that he gets his information through the management structure.</p>
<p>2. Nokia tries to or wants to be perceived as an open organisation where everyone can communicate with each other. Of course, I am Nokia, and Nokia is a communication company. You see, as well within different departments that I'm communicating between different departments, I call America, I call China, China calls us, I get emails from them, I get requests from them. Projects are being emailed so that what I do for a customer in the UK might be helpful for a customer in Bulgaria or in Holland or Denmark, I then talk to the people, I try to help or they try to help us.</p>	<p>2. P2 states that his company desires to be perceived as an open organisation where employees freely communicate with each other. P2 asserts that his company is Nokia, and a communication company. P1 states that they are also communicating internally within different departments as a company and between various global locations of the company. Meaning that UK staffs do communicate with staffs in America and China, and that staffs in China in turn, communicate with staffs in the UK through the exchange of emails and requests. Such that projects are exchanged, and the services the company provides for a customer in the UK might be helpful for a customer in other locations, for example, Bulgaria, Holland or Denmark, since employees interact and help each other.</p>
<p>3. I think it comes down to the attitude in the company that I am left with this idea to be open to each other. Probably, it takes a Nokia person to do this, / may be in the recruitment process they are willing to get people in who are easy to share information with or like to talk or find it very interesting to talk to people from different countries, different cultures and different backgrounds.</p>	<p>3. P2 attributes such ease of internal communication to the attitude within his company, in which people are open to each other. P2 asserts that perhaps, it takes his company's employees to adopt such an open attitude, and traces such open attitude to the recruitment process in which the company is willing to employ people with good interpersonal communication skills, people who are approachable and happy to associate with others from different countries as well as from different cultural backgrounds.</p>
<p>4. Training of course is one thing I do a lot in Nokia, also the technology is moving fast, but also I get a lot of soft skills training where I am taught to communicate, to hold the mirror in front of ourselves, and look at ourselves the way I communicate with each other, the way I can improve communication with each other. Training is one of the things within Nokia I have.</p>	<p>4. P2 identifies training as constituting part of his experience, as something that is widespread in the company given the fact that technology is constantly evolving. P2 also affirms that they equally undergo soft skills training in which they are taught communication skills. P2 compares the training metaphorically with the mirror, in which staffs are urged to examine and reflect the way in which they would like others to communicate to</p>

	<p>them as a way of to help them improve the manner in which as employees they communicate with each other. P2 emphasizes that training is one of things that they have within his Nokia.</p>
<p>5. Yeah, because of these tools that Nokia is using, they probably get more commitment out of us, I're more committed to be part of the whole Nokia experience, and of course, that is what the company wants./ They give me this motivation, all the secondary things, you get service excellent, bonuses, you're allowed to take your girlfriend out for a dinner in posh restaurants, and holidays, these are the tools they use to motivate me, and broadband, everything I have, that's what I get.</p>	<p>5. P2 asserts that from his experience, and given the various tools his company uses, it probably gets more commitment from him and his other colleagues, as they are more committed to be part of the whole company experience, which in his perception, is what the company desires. P2 states that the company also tries to motivate him using a range of bonus schemes including a bonus for excellent customer service, paid holidays, and broadband, and everything the company may have access to, that is what employees receive.</p>
<p>I: What part of that experience will you consider IM?</p> <p>6. I think internal marketing is the big picture, as I see my management they're probably trying to keep me and that is their aim because they lost a lot of time. The first two years in my job you are next to not useful, they're not making any money out of you. So the longer they can keep you, the more viable you can be to them,/ but of course, it's not only keeping you, but also being motivated and committed to get up in the morning at 5O'clock and be in Bristol at 8O'clock to speak to your customers, to be there for your customers and to get this commitment and get this motivation.</p>	<p>6. * When questioned by the investigator as to what part of the experience would he consider specifically as internal marketing. P2 states that internal marketing is the broad picture and emphasized that the intention of his company was to retain him as an employee, given that he was less useful to the company in the first two years of his employment. Therefore, P2 asserts that the longer the company can retain an employee the more such employee is able to work as intended for the company. More so, P2 asserts that the company also aims to motivate employees so that they are committed to satisfy the customers' needs. Thus, revealing that P2 is obviously aware that organisations should do more than retain employees but ensure that employees are equally motivated and committed to satisfy their customers.</p>
<p>7. Nokia of course, they're smart people, they try to use this internal marketing, it's a tool for them to keep me smiling, keep me happy and motivated</p>	<p>7. P2 states that his company attempts to use internal marketing or rather, as he perceives, internal marketing is an effective tool that his company uses to keep him satisfied and motivated.</p>
<p>8. For example, I did a big project at the start of the year, and at the end of that year I got a nice bonus out of it. They, I wasn't completely happy how they gave it to us, may be that is the UK thing, I got a nice envelope, and in there was a large amount of money, which was nice. That of course, is one of the internal marketing tools they have.</p>	<p>8. P2 demonstrates how his company uses internal marketing to satisfy him with an illustration of how was paid a bonus for being involved in a project earlier in the year. Although P2 expressed reservation over the manner in which the bonus was given to him, he nonetheless thought it was nice, as the envelope contained a large sum of money. He asserts that bonus payment is one of the internal marketing tools his company has.</p>

## Appendix Four

### Steps in the analysis of determining IM structure from steps 2 and steps 3 above (Participant 1)

*Only the transformed meaning units and the determined structure are illustrated in the columns because of space considerations.*

1. * P1 asserts he could recall a situation in which internal marketing has occurred for him by citing the internal communication project his company has recently undertaken. P1 starts by providing a background to the project in order to give an idea of how his experience began. P1 states that originally, a student attached to the manufacturing department of his company was mandated by his boss, the operations director to do a small project on a number of issues including internal communication since most employees in the department were complaining of lack of internal communication. P1 then says that the student began by conducting few interviews amongst employees before coming up with some findings.	The experience of IM and its importance to inter-departmental interactions was highlighted via a project on internal communication undertaken by a student following increasing complaints amongst employees regarding lack of interdepartmental communication within the company.
2. P1 states that some of the findings from the mini project conducted by the student were useful, nevertheless, P1 asserts that from his experience of having been employed in the company a lot longer than the student he realised that some of the issues uncovered by the student did not exactly capture employees' issues in the company. P1 then blames employees' false responses for such poor findings, and attributes such to the fact that employees had no knowledge as to why the student was asked to conduct such internal survey in the first place. P1 says because employees lacked such knowledge, they therefore responded falsely in order to avoid getting into trouble in case their responses got back to the directors of the company.	Passed over
3. P1 nonetheless affirms that the student's findings were useful in that the directors of the company considered the findings and requested the heads, or in effect, the most experienced staffs in each department, comprising P1 and two other female colleagues in the company to work as a team on the student's findings including a list of other issues.	Passed over
4. However, P1 states that after they had examined the student's findings, they decided to conduct another employee interview since the student's findings did not address key issues affecting the business. P1 states that they approached employees, who they believed would be honest in addressing the concerns raised in the survey, and then went further to inform such employees of the purpose of the survey and assured them of their confidentiality, meaning that	The realisation that the report from the mini project did not adequately address key issues affecting the business necessitated the need to conduct another employee survey. Although this time, the survey was approached differently, as employees were informed as to rationale and the purpose of the survey whilst assuring them of anonymity and their confidentiality. Amongst the major problems that emerged was lack of interdepartmental interactions in terms of

nothing such employees said in their interview would be attributed to them or passed back to the directors. P1's perception was that such approach would offer such employees the freedom to express their views without fear of victimisation. The implication was that they got a list of responses that actually reflect why problems were occurring in the business in terms of all the internal processing flows. P1 affirms that the major issue that came out from the second interview was the absence of communication across departments in terms of understanding who is responsible for what department.	understanding individual responsibilities within the business.
5. P1 states that they actually realised amongst the team that they lacked knowledge of the management structure within the business in terms of their individual responsibilities towards one another. He asserts that such lack of knowledge within them was an issue amongst all employees, as it was difficult amongst the staff to understand who their managers were in a business of forty-five people.	Passed over
6. P1 however, reiterated that the team identified a number of salient issues affecting the business, which they uncovered from reinterviewing employees, and then linked such issues in relation to how they affect various departments. P1 perceives that having got together was useful as each member of the team came from different side of the business including manufacturing, purchasing, sales and finance.	Passed over
7. P1 states that they had series of initial meetings that provided them with the opportunity to discuss and settle minor issues, which although were not part of the experience itself, have been source of major concern amongst them in the past. P1 expressed surprise from realising how easily issues could be resolved amongst them just by communicating with each other. He asserts that it was never the case in the past given that the directors of the company did not make an effort to highlight the importance of such nature of communication. P1 then says that they got motivated from resolving such minor issues and by communicating with each other before the main issues arising from the experience had even started, and this provided the team with an idea of the success they could achieve from communicating and deliberating on the issues relating to the experience.	The sudden awareness and realisation of how easily and quickly past conflicts could be resolved amongst them just by communicating to each other was motivating, which meant that the team became more positive and enthusiastic that the aims of the (project) experience can be successfully realised.
8. P1 states that they commenced discussing issues uncovered from the experience with an internal appraisal before articulating different ideas on how they could improve communication between departments. P1 asserts that they have presented the board of directors with their ideas and that they are considering them with a view to implementing them. Although, P1 says the directors need to review such ideas in order to consider their financial implications before going	Passed over

ahead with their implementation given that some of the ideas might obviously require funding.	
9. P1 affirms that the key aspect of the experience is that there is now improved communication across department within the business, as they have realised amongst themselves that they must communicate better and also streamline the channels of communication within the business so that employees can better relate with each other. P1 admits that although his view of how such channels of communication can be structured seems to be unclear, he nonetheless states that before communication can be effective and information disseminated across the departments, it has to stem from the directors of the company and then go all the way down the chain of the company. He perceives that the key thing to effective communication is ensuring that information is properly disseminated across the board in a manner that everyone is aware and involved in what goes on within the business.	The need to put in place proper communication and information dissemination channels became obvious from the experience. And one of the key aspects of the experience was the realisation that the directors of the company must lead the way in disseminating information across the business, which entails creating awareness and encouraging employee involvement in what the company aims to achieve.
10. P1 recalls ordinary situations in which dispatch goods were packaged wrongly, and attributes such wrong packaging to employees' lack of knowledge of the proper packaging procedure. P1 states that upon investigation as to why employees lacked such information, they realised that proper procedures and training were not in place. P1 attributes such lack to the fact that no one knew whose responsibility it was to provide such employees with the requisite training, which of course, in P1's perception explains why such employees got the packaging wrong.	The wrong packaging of goods was attributed to negligence in providing employees responsible for such functions with the correct information and training on proper packaging procedures, but more so, to the fact that no one knew whose responsibility it was to provide the employees with such training.
11. P1 affirms that the experience did uncover other complex problems affecting the business, and will definitely be a huge project to sustain. He perceives the major aspect of the experience to be internal marketing although in his company, it was being misinterpreted as internal communication. This is because, as P1 asserts, the experience involves how to disseminate information across the business as a whole. P1 reiterates that the focus of the experience was how to ensure effective internal communication within the business. He admits as heads of various departments, they realised the need to each address the issue of training and individual responsibilities in their respective departments, as well as ensure that everyone in the business is aware of the objectives of the business in terms of its aims, and product offerings.	Central to the internal marketing experience was the realisation and admission that heads of each department must address the issue of training and also create internal awareness as to the objectives of the business. There was a perception however, that amongst the goals of the experience was how to ensure effective internal communication, address the issue of training, and ensure that everyone within the company is aware of the objectives of business.
12. P1 states that one of the issues highlighted as a result of the experience was the fact that employees lack knowledge of the product the company offers. P1 emphasizes that employees should actually be trained to understand all the products the company offers. Therefore, one of the proposals from the experience is to ensure that there is in place a proper training system within	One of the key aspects that emerged from the internal marketing experience was the need to provide better training systems so that employees can have a better knowledge of individual and departmental functions within the business, as well as understand their own jobs, the customers, and what such customers hope to benefit from the company.



the business, so that everyone can understand not just the demands of their jobs, but also an idea of the overall business, the customers, as well as their needs.	
13. P1 recalls the quality problems the company has encountered in the past in which goods dispatched with the wrong packaging resulted in customer complaints. P1 perceives that employees need to understand why the customer was unhappy and why such quality issues were a problem for the customer rather than the directors of the company demanding that such problems be rectified. P1 states that employees should be sensitised to what they have done wrong, why the customer was unhappy about such wrong packaging, so that employees can empathise with the customer. P1 reemphasizes that sensitising employees to quality issues and the effect it might have on the customer was a challenge the company need to focus upon. P1 however, admits that achieving such challenge is difficult given perhaps, the low employee morale.	Passed over
14. P1 perceives that accomplishing the issues arising from the experience would entail a dramatic cultural change for the company. He asserts that the team has drawn the attention of the directors to the fact that they need also to change. P1 recollects as a student, he learnt that for culture to change within an organisation there has to be a top-bottom approach to bringing about such change, otherwise, it is unlikely to succeed. Thus, revealing that P1 is aware of the organisational reality in which top-level managers are perceived to have the right kind of authority to initiate and sustain change within an organisation. He feels enthusiastic about the company's new direction, and reiterates the fact that although the experience was being misinterpreted as internal communication in his company, that it was actually internal marketing and affirms that was what the company has done and working towards.	The perception that the internal marketing experience would precipitate a dramatic cultural change in the organisation was embraced, although there was a sense that it requires strong top-level management support/involvement in order to succeed. This perception was reaffirmed as crucial to the company's new direction as well as one of the aims of the IM experience, although the company misinterprets IM as internal communication.
15. P1 reaffirms that the experience entails the ability to make sensible decisions and that if employees are involved in what the company aims to achieve, they will appreciate and actually strive to understand their individual roles within the business. Rather than employees simply being coerced to do something without first making them understand the reasons as to why they are being asked to do such. P1's perception was that eventually employees would understand the responsibilities of other colleagues as well as the needs of other departments. P1 elaborates that sales department, for instance, need to understand the limitations in the production department before making demands of them. On the other hand, the production department needs to appreciate that the sales department is aiming to satisfy the external customer. Just as the accounts department need to be aware of the cash flow	There is awareness that employees need to be involved in what the company aims to achieve rather than just being instructed to execute tasks. Such approach is one of the key aims of the internal marketing experience, and entails effective integration and better coordination between the functional units in the company. There is an expectation that encouraging employee involvement via integration would ultimately, lead such employees to understand the activities of other departments.

needs of the business in order to provide the right level of financial support across the board. P1 reiterates that the key aim of the whole experience is to get everyone to be involved in what is going on within the company.	
16. P1 asserts that the directors need to understand first that they are aiming to establish a middle-level management team, which in P1's view is ironic given that the industry normal practice is to level the middle level management. P1 asserts that they are aiming to strengthen and empower middle level managers in order to enable such managers to concentrate on running the day-to-day aspect of the business and to communicate with each other.	As it turned out, the internal marketing experience was to encourage individual involvement and empower middle management position to ensure effective communication and to handle the day-to-day activities within the business.
17. P1 indicates that one of the aims of the experience is to maintain regular meetings between the management heads in order to enable them to have discussion on the issues affecting the business, and to disseminate the issues arising from such discussion to their various employee teams. He admits that although the whole exercise might be perceived as just meetings, he however, asserts that if such meetings are well managed, then it could mean that employees can receive information through such meetings.	One of the major purposes of the internal marketing experience was to ensure regular communication and dissemination of information amongst the various departments within the company.
18. * When asked by the investigator which part of the experience would be considered as internal marketing, P1 asserts that the entire experience constitutes for him the whole idea of internal marketing.	Passed over
19. P1 indicates that the key area of the experience was the communication aspect, which he says, they keep referring to as internal communication in his company. He asserts that internal marketing is all about communication and the dissemination of information, as well as creating awareness amongst people within the business in order to improve efficiency and create customer value. P1 admits that ensuring customer value is the major focus of the business.	There was a view that the internal marketing experience was all about ensuring interaction and information dissemination amongst employees, which was required in order to create customer value.
20. P1 states that although keeping employees informed is important, he however, perceives that if such process does not enhance or improve customer service, then the business may not always achieve its overall objectives. In his view, internal marketing is simply keeping employees and individuals within the business involved with key strategic issues in order to ensure that they have adequate knowledge and understanding of their responsibilities.	Although the need for interaction between employees within the business was thought to be important, the crucial aim of the internal marketing was for such interactions to improve and enhance customer service for the company. There was a view that internal marketing entails keeping employees involved with the strategic needs of the business by ensuring that they have good knowledge and understanding of their responsibilities.
21. P1 asserts that the main objective would be to provide a better customer service, whilst recalling the quality issue he had earlier mentioned, which arose from poor packaging. P1 reaffirms that if employees had understood what the correct packaging procedures were, then that might helped to prevent customer complaints. P1 however, asserts that everything he had described so far constitutes his experience of internal	The realisation that ensuring there is in place the necessary training systems and its relevance to preventing quality problems within the business, such as, wrong packaging, was considered as the main objective of the internal marketing experience.

marketing.	
22. * When asked by the investigator to clarify his view of internal marketing, P1 explicitly states that apart from the theoretical assumptions associated with internal marketing. For him, internal marketing is keeping employees within the business involved and ensuring that they understand the business as well as their responsibilities within the business in order to understand what the business is aiming to achieve. P1 also states that employee involvement requires that employees are informed and provided with more knowledge, in a way that it easier for them to recognise and understand other the limitations of other departments in order to ensure effective coordination within the business. Rather than the departments operating independently and having conflicts with each other, which he had earlier mentioned.	There was experiential understanding of internal marketing as keeping employees within the business involved and ensuring that they are empowered, which entails providing employees with information and knowledge of activities in other departments in order to ensure effective coordination across the company.
23. P1 asserts that internal marketing is simply ensuring there is communication between departments regarding the activities within the business.	Passed over

## Appendix Five

### Steps in the analysis of determining IM structure from steps 2 and steps 3 above (Participant 2)

*Only the transformed meaning units and the determined structure are illustrated in the columns because of space considerations.*

1. * P2 when asked by the investigator to describe his experience of IM first designates IM as instances in which organisations use many tools. P2 states, for instance, that his organisation tends to use various tools, such as, webcast, emails and PowerPoint presentations to communicate and share information with him. P2 indicates that he gets his information through the management structure.	The perception was that internal marketing experience involves the various tools, such as, webcast, emails and PowerPoint presentations, which organisations use to communicate and share information with their employees.
2. P2 states that his company desires to be perceived as an open organisation where employees freely communicate with each other. P2 asserts that his company is Nokia, and a communication company. P1 states that they are also communicating internally within different departments as a company and between various global locations of the company. Meaning that UK staffs do communicate with staffs in America and China, and that staffs in China in turn, communicate with staffs in the UK through the exchange of emails and requests. Such that projects are exchanged, and the services the company provides for a customer in the UK might be helpful for a customer in other locations, for example, Bulgaria, Holland or Denmark, since employees interact and help each other.	There is a sense that since the company desires to be perceived as a communication company, it encourages open communication and interaction amongst employees, not just within one location, but across different departments in various geographical locations so that employees are able to exchange information that enables the company to deliver the same customer experience across geographical borders.
3. P2 attributes such ease of internal communication to the attitude within his company, in which people are open to each other. P2 asserts that perhaps, it takes his company's employees to adopt such an open attitude, and traces such open attitude to the recruitment process in which the company is willing to employ people with good interpersonal communication skills, people who are approachable and happy to associate with others from different countries as well as from different cultural backgrounds.	The perception that the company was more likely to employ people with the ability to communicate and interact easily with others regardless of their cultural backgrounds emphasises the importance and the ease of interaction amongst employees, which was reported as an attitude within the company.
4. P2 identifies training as constituting part of his experience, as something that is widespread in the company given the fact that technology is constantly evolving. P2 also affirms that they equally undergo soft skills training in which they are taught communication skills. P2 compares the training metaphorically with the mirror, in which staffs are urged to examine and reflect the way in which they would like others to communicate to	The emphasis on the importance of employee training in the company underscores its vital role to enhancing interaction amongst employees.

<p>them as a way of to help them improve the manner in which as employees they communicate with each other. P2 emphasizes that training is one of things that they have within his Nokia.</p>	
<p>5. P2 asserts that from his experience, and given the various tools his company uses, it probably gets more commitment from him and his other colleagues, as they are more committed to be part of the whole company experience, which in his perception, is what the company desires. P2 states that the company also tries to motivate him using a range of bonus schemes including a bonus for excellent customer service, paid holidays, and broadband, and everything the company may have access to, that is what employees receive.</p>	<p>The awareness that the company uses tools, such as, excellent customer service bonuses, paid holiday and broadband services and their perceived influence on employee commitment and motivation was one of the purposes/goals internal marketing experience was designed to achieve.</p>
<p>6. * When questioned by the investigator as to what part of the experience would he consider specifically as internal marketing. P2 states that internal marketing is the broad picture and emphasized that the intention of his company was to retain him as an employee, given that he was less useful to the company in the first two years of his employment. Therefore, P2 asserts that the longer the company can retain an employee the more such employee is able to work as intended for the company. More so, P2 asserts that the company also aims to motivate employees so that they are committed to satisfy the customers' needs. Thus, revealing that P2 is obviously aware that organisations should do more than retain employees but ensure that employees are equally motivated and committed to satisfy their customers.</p>	<p>From the experience, it was perceived that internal marketing involves the various tools that the company uses to retain its employees, but more so, there was the notion that the company should aim to motivate employees and ensure that they were committed to satisfy the needs of their external customers.</p>
<p>7. P2 states that his company attempts to use internal marketing or rather, as he perceives, internal marketing is an effective tool that his company uses to keep him satisfied and motivated.</p>	<p>There was awareness that internal marketing can be used to achieve employee satisfaction and motivation.</p>
<p>8. P2 demonstrates how his company uses internal marketing to satisfy and motivate him with an illustration of how was paid a bonus for being involved in a project earlier in the year. Although P2 expressed reservation over the manner in which the bonus was given to him, he nonetheless thought it was nice, as the envelope contained a large sum of money. He asserts that bonus payment is one of the internal marketing tools his company has.</p>	<p>There was emphasis on bonus payment as amongst the internal marketing tools that the company uses to satisfy and motivate employees.</p>

## Appendix Six

### Transcribed interview protocol for P1

**Q: In as much detail as possible, can you describe a situation in which internal marketing has occurred for you?**

1. **P1:** Yes, I can. The key one will be the internal communications project I call it that I've just started working on. Now, I need to give some background perhaps so that you know for your research how this came about. Originally, small project was given to a student who was working at Filtermist, as part of, he was working in my manufacturing department and he has to do a mini project on a number of aspects. /
2. His boss, the operations director says everyone was complaining no one was communicating with each other, so do a project on internal communications. So he did few interviews with people and came up with some results in the project. /
3. Some of the findings were good, but having worked in the business a lot longer, I realised that some of the responses he has got were probably false, because they didn't understand why he was asking these questions and they didn't want to give true answers in case he got back to the directors. So they weren't necessarily giving the correct answers because they were scared that if they gave the right answer he might get back to the directors and they get in trouble. /
4. But anyway, it helped us though, because the directors took his report and then took three of us, heads of each department or in effect, the most experienced in each department. That is myself, and two other women in the business, and said, here is this report, and then gave us a list of other questions to go with it. And said, here is the project, go away and do this. /
5. So I had to read the original report I looked through, I said well, it's missing things, or this is wrong. So, what I did was I went out and re-interviewed people, and asked them, people that I knew who would give us honest answers because I told them why I were doing it. I said that nothing will go back to the directors, it was all anonymous, so they could say what they wanted. And so I got a list of issues, and it all got to do with why problems occur in the business in terms of all the processing flow. The key thing that came up was just the communications between departments who was responsible for what department. /
6. I didn't even know the true management tree as to which person was in charge of which other person. So that was an issue amongst staff members, nobody knew who their boss was, and this is a business of 45 people. /
7. Anyway I did this project and I actually decided to, I sectioned it all down and I came up with a number of different issues within the business that needs

addressing in each department. So, just getting together as a whole, it was a member of the sales, a member of the accounts, a member of the purchasing, he was there for the manufacturing side of the business. In effect, I had someone who was representing every side of the business./

8. And for the first few meetings that I had, I actually ironed out a few little minor issues, which weren't part of the project but it's just been bugging us for the past, probably a few years. And just by talking to each other, I realised how many issues that could be easily solved. But in the past, no body had done it because the directors hadn't been bothered or just didn't think it was important. And it's really from then on I got motivated, that by being able to solving those minor issues just from sitting down round the table before the project had ever even started. And I suddenly go wow! think of what I could do here./
9. And to start off with the report, I did sort of a mini SWOT, as in not the real SWOT analysis, but I just did a mini version of it, and came up with these ideas on how I could improve things, how the departments could communicate between each other. I've recently presented it to the board of directors, and they are considering it. But they've told us since they are wanting to go ahead with the majority of it, they just need to check through certain things. Because some of the things that I suggested cost money, and they are sort of weighing things up in terms of cost benefits obviously. /
10. But I think the key aspect of it was that each department is now talking to each other. Because the key thing I suddenly realised was that I need to communicate better within the business, and I have to sort out my lines of communication so I know who I should talk to, and then they would talk to the other person. I know although it sounds longwinded, what I've found is that it should be the directors speak to the directors, the directors then speak to the heads of their departments, the department heads then speak to each other or to their directors, and then they can disseminate information down the train. In effect, it's how to disseminate the information all the way to the bottom of the business so that everyone gets involved with what I'm aiming for./
11. Simple situations whereby I have problems with dispatch of goods not going out in their correct packaging, it was found it was because they've never been told what the correct packaging was. When I investigated why don't they know, it was because there was no procedure, nobody really knew whose job it was to train them, and so, it was no wonder that they would get things wrong, because, it put holes everywhere. /
12. Really, it opened a can of worms this project did, and it's gonna be a huge project to keep going. But the start of it, and the key aspect of this project, although I called it internal communications, could be argued as being internal marketing, is the lines of communication, how to disseminate the information down to everybody about the business as a whole. And so everything I've discussed is centred around this communication aspect and I realised I all need to go away to my own departments, look at the training, look at who is

responsible for what, ensure that people are informed about what is going on in the business, what I're actually trying to achieve, what products I're building./

13. One of the aspects that was brought up is that, I're building on this project in the hearts of the people that don't even know what they do. All these products I're making I should actually train them on that. So one of the aspects the project is come up with that, I need to get a better training system in place, so that I know everybody knows not just their jobs, but that they've got an idea of the business, what I do, who are customers are, and to understand really what are customers want from us./
14. Some of the issues I've had in the past, I mean quality issues where stuffs have gone out wrong, and the customers have phoned up complaining, and I need to understand the customer why he finds that annoying, and why that has made it a problem for him instead of the directors just coming down and shouting at people saying get! it right. They need to understand what they've done wrong, why the customer is actually upset about it, so that they actually empathise with the customer. I mean that's something that I need to do, or try and do, which is, I mean it's a very difficult task because one of the guys that's working there, they really arguably perhaps, aren't bothered. They just come in, they wanna do a job, and then go home. /
15. So hopefully, it's gonna be a massive cultural change for us to actually do this, as I have described to the directors they need to change as well, because as I have learnt in my past studies, for culture to change in the business it has to come from the top, otherwise it's not gonna happen. So it's quite an exciting time really. As I say, this is where, I call it internal communications but another phrase for it would be internal marketing, and this is what I've done, and I're really working towards. /
16. As I have said before to you, a lot of it is common sense. If you get people involved, then they are actually gonna appreciate, and to actually try to understand what they are doing, instead of just being given an instruction and not understanding why they are doing it. The idea is that eventually people understands where everybody is, and they understand other departments' needs as well. Sales have got to understand that they can't just ask production for a unit to be built tomorrow, because if production have to drop everything for that one unit, that means somebody else is gonna have to do ten units, it's gonna get pulled back as well, so sales has got to understand production. And production has got to understand that sales aren't pressuring them to annoy them but because their customers wanted the goods quickly and so on. And accounts again, they need to be aware of how I're trying to do business, and the cash flow and all that sort of thing, it's all getting everybody involved. /
17. This is the starting point because the directors have got to understood that they are looking to set up this middle management team, which is quite ironic in a way, because all you tend to hear about these days is middle management team is actually being erased, and being taken out of the equation. Well, what I're looking at is actually putting them back in, because they can then look after day-to-day running of the business. They can talk to each other, /



18. one of the aspects of this project is to have regular communications meetings between the management heads so that I can discuss issues that have come up, and then I intend going back to my teams to tell them what's been discussed. Although it sounds like it's just going to be just meetings, but as long as they are done properly, it would mean that people get the information through them./

**Q: What part of that experience will you consider to be internal marketing?**

19. **P1:** I say I would all. I really would, because it's all parts and particle./
20. I mean the key bit is the communication side, I keep calling it internal communications. Internal marketing is all about communicating to people and getting people to understand this thing about issues, the whole idea is to get them to have the company running more efficiently, and keep providing a better service to the customer. At the end of the day, it's got to be a point to it all./
21. It's all very well keeping people informed, but if that doesn't actually help improve the service then sometimes you don't always get to the point./
22. So all of this is gonna come down to keeping the internal people involved to understand what they're doing./
23. Focus is got to be on giving a better customer service, I should have drawn from the quality issues I've talked about before, less packing problems, because people know how to pack in which box so that the customer is not gonna complain. I would say so far, it's all internal marketing. /

**Q: Are you then saying internal marketing is what?**

24. **P1:** My view of internal marketing, forget what the theories are, is to keep people within the business involved and to ensure that everybody knows what's there, and ensure everybody knows what their role is within that business, so that they know what they are trying to achieve, and that's what it's all about./
25. So that people are not kept in the dark, and they are going out there with more knowledge so it's easier for one to operate because you understand where other departments are coming from. You understand their limitations, their issues so you can work between it. /
26. Instead of you being non-linked department fighting each other which I've spoken before. /
27. So the internal marketing is just communications between each department as to what is happening. /

## Appendix Seven

### Transcribed interview protocol for P2

**Q: In as much detail as possible, can you describe a situation in which internal marketing has occurred for you?**

1. **P2:** These are instances where companies use a lot of tools. Let me say Nokia tends to communicate to me, they are sharing information with me, they're using webcast for that or emails, PowerPoint presentations. If it comes down via management line, I get my information./
2. Nokia tries to or wants to be perceived as an open organisation where everyone can communicate with each other. Of course I am Nokia, and Nokia is a communication company. You see as well within different departments that I'm communicating between different departments, I call America, I call China, China calls us, I get emails from them I get requests from them. Projects are being mailed so that what I do for a customer in the UK might be helpful for a customer in Bulgaria or in Holland or Denmark, I then talk to the people, I try to help or they try to help us. /
3. I think it comes down to the attitude in the company that I am left with this idea to be open to each other. Probably, it takes a Nokia person to do this, /
4. may be in the recruitment process they are willing to get people in who are easy to share information with or like to talk or find it very interesting to talk to people from different countries, different cultures and different backgrounds./
5. Training of course, one thing I do a lot in Nokia also the technology is moving fast, but also I get a lot of soft skills training where I am taught to communicate, to hold the mirror in front of ourselves, and look at ourselves the way I communicate with each other, the way I can improve communication with each other. Training is one of the things within Nokia I have./
6. Yeah, because of these tools that Nokia is using, they probably get more commitment out of us, I'm more committed to be part of the whole Nokia experience, and of course, that is what the company wants./
7. They give me this motivation, all the secondary things, you get service excellent, bonuses, you're allowed to take your girlfriend out for a dinner in posh restaurants, and holidays, these are the tools they use to motivate me, and broadband, everything I have, that's what I get./

**Q: What part of that experience will you consider IM?**

8. **P2:** I think internal marketing is the big picture as I see my management they're probably trying to keep me and that is their aim because they lost a lot of time. The first two years in my job you are next to not useful, they're not making any money out of you. So the longer they can keep you, the more viable you can be to them,/
9. but of course, it's not only keeping you, but also being motivated and committed to get up in the morning at 5O'clock and be in Bristol at 8O'clock to speak to your customers, to be there for your customers and to get this commitment and get this motivation./
10. Nokia of course, they're smart people, they try to use this internal marketing, it's a tool for them to keep me smiling, keep me happy and motivated. For example, I did a big project at the start of the year, and at the end of that year I got a nice bonus out of it. They, I wasn't completely happy how they gave it to us, may be that is the UK thing, I got a nice envelope, and in there was a large amount of money, which was nice. That of course, is one of the internal marketing tools they have./

## Appendix Eight

### Excerpts from the transcribed interview protocol for P3

**Q: Can you describe in as much detail as possible a situation in which internal marketing has occurred for you?**

1. **P3:** Internal marketing as in my managers sitting with us and speaking to us what is expected from us./
2. I have a meeting every Wednesday morning, and the branch opens half an hour later, that is my main, I call it a DOFT, they either have a video, or a product they're launching, or they are making us aware of a product, or that they want to increase the sales target at that point, and the managers will do a whole like eh, I think it's being sent to them from head office what they need to say to us. And they would basically sit there in front of everybody, and everybody has to be there on that morning, and they would be told what is expected of us, what I'm doing well in and what I need to improve in, and they would send us packages down either to join a game, or may be sometime or just sit there and watch a video. /
3. The managers would say well, this is how I as group will try and do this, they would give us a strategy of this is what is expected from your team, this is what is expected from your team, and this is what is expected from your team, and how all the teams would come together to achieve what the head office or the regional office had told us I'm aiming for really. That's the main internal marketing that I've seen every week, and also, obviously, on a day-to-day basis my manager would tell us in the morning this is what I've done well on, this is what I need to improve on and this is why I need to do it. Most of it is towards getting my targets right, and some of it is./
4. I had a meeting with all the customer advisors and all they said all day was that the people who get the best sales target aren't the people who help the most customers, and that's where I'm going generally. If I help them my services gets better, if I help them my sales gets better. So you sit down with somebody I'm actually helping them, I'm not selling them something, I'm helping them with something, so that is it. /

**Q: You talked about video, what do you see in the video?**

5. **P3:** A lot of the videos, but some of the videos is just more generally a lot about security and stuffs in the branch. /
6. Some of them are about somebody has walked into somewhere and the customer advisor hasn't sat down with them and explained to them, they could have had this, they could have had that, and they've walked out. And they show example

of what could have happen if they came back to you complaining about it. On the other hand, there are also people who are actually saying I've had the best service from the bank. /

7. A lot of the stuffs that comes out in the video, most of it is, but this is how I used to do, this is how well I are now, and I can still do better, there is actual diagrams they show to us how to get there. You get a lot of that. /

**Q: What part of that experience would you consider to be internal marketing?**

8. **P3:** As in where they're actually trying to promote their products to you...I would say all of it basically. The whole DOFT is basically put towards that. /
9. Other than some week where I have to watch a video for security reasons, most of it is towards internal marketing. /
10. They're getting you to see this is why I're doing it, this is why it is good for you but this is why is good for the customer really. Because I're not there to sell, I're there to help them./

**Q: Are you then saying internal marketing is what?**

11. But this area is not doing as good what it should do, and this is how I need to improve it, and this is why I need to improve it, and what the benefits would be to us to improve that, and is to reach my targets./

**Q: How does that really help you improve your targets?**

12. **P3:** It doesn't really help me but it actually helps get the others to understand what my role is. It's not just all sales-oriented. A lot of them don't understand what I're doing, as far as they're concerned they think I're selling something for the sake of selling it, but if I tell them, say, for example, my mortgages are good, if you get some people in to us to sit down with us, the example of how much money I have saved them, and it does work. /
13. I have had people who have come in and they're paying £900 a month, and I've reduced it down to £400. They're obviously a lot better off. /
14. I've put a savings plan in place for them, they've done well, they've had a brilliant service and they're happy when they leave. And I use such examples to tell my colleagues, rather than, it's more to prove to a lot of colleagues, this is why I do the sales not for the reasons you think I're doing the sales for./

**Q: So what is internal marketing?**

15. **P3:** I think internal marketing is a tool companies use to tell their employees how to improve themselves in their role and reach their targets, and I think that's what internal marketing is, and to get you to do that, and be happy in doing it, as in you're not considering it as sales, as in target, you're considering as a service that you're providing.

**Q: So it's not just sales, there is another angle to it?**

16. **P3:** There is, there is. It's not just sales, I do get bonuses, I get two bonuses. I get a bonus for my sales, and I get a bonus for my service as well. I'm targeted on my service, there is what is called a customer service survey that comes out every three months, and depending on the results I get back from that, you get another bonus for that. It's not as big as the sales bonus, but it's still nevertheless a bonus. /

**Q: Does it motivate you?**

17. **P3:** That one, definitely yes. Definitely. Service is more my thing than overall sales. Most of my sales come through my service, rather than the other way round. But the people who deal with just sales do seem to do better on just sales, even though they do a lot of the times get a lot of complaints about them because of their lack of service.

## Appendix Nine

### Excerpts from the transcribed interview protocol for P4

**Q: Can you describe in as much detail as possible a situation in which internal marketing has occurred for you?**

1. It was something that just came out of just sitting round the table. There was two of us, and I just said that everywhere is having food and drinks fair, I think it's something I should have so I can promote and also raise my profile really with other such cities. So, not only was it something I knew I needed to communicate to the public, I knew I haven't got the resource internally in order to get the message out enough to different kinds of people in different areas, regionally, nationally, or those kinds of things. I just don't have those contacts. /
2. So I think something was mentioned about internal marketing was the only way in order to get the message out for the project. So all I did was brought it up on the agenda point of the City Marketing Group, got everyone talking about that, I had to set up a project team that had members from the regional centre, from Black Country Tourism, bringing out these partners out of completely different cross-section of the markets, that have different databases, different mailing lists. So they have different sets of end users as well as partners. /
3. Black Country Tourism deals with the other issues within the whole of Black Country, which in the agenda are some of the things I needed to address. So regarding marketing at the Black Country level I did within my service, the fact that I held it at one of the services venues, again they supported us operationally all day with their staff. Because of the way in which they perform, it's a rock venue, they still have huge databases they could still hit, so I kind of utilised things like that. I've got all or some of the major attractions and venues within the City or Council buildings if you like, through Art Galleries, the parks, it's all part of the same service, so I end up meeting there for various meetings, so it's just a favour really. So you just turn up and say come-on! Help me promote this. /
4. They know I'd do it likewise. I promote local community events anywhere through looking after the city's events management system. Again that's something I put information in once, and generate the various websites to formulate a portfolio of community paper. /
5. I utilised City Council services within graphics, communications, and press team, anyone in the organisation I knew. It's not like us going down and writing my own press release or going to a local graphics company you see. These are things I sat down at the beginning of the financial year to say that I got certain funding within, and to utilise services, so that's what I did. Press team were

brilliant, they write all my press releases, I had a photographer from the Council./



## Appendix Ten

### Excerpts from the transcribed interview protocol for P5

**Q: Can you describe in as much detail as possible a situation in which internal marketing has occurred for you?**

1. I have my 'in the know' briefings, which is basically minimal information that comes from my chief executive. It gets passed down to his media kind of team, they pass that down to their team, that gets passed down to us. It's meant to encourage face to face discussions rather than just email, so it's down on paper rather than as email or as a memo./
2. I have regular team meetings, so my manager will sit us all down and go through 'in the know' points which have come up, which could be anything from when my recycling is being done to when I're going to get the next pay review, so literally it's everything. So that's up to us then to digest and to kind of go back to my managers if I feel that I want to discuss it further./
3. I have a resource internally called 'City Direct' which basically, it's a massive switchboard, you can ring them up you can get internal contact details, which is really helpful, it makes information accessible. And you know, rather than have a telephone directory that goes out again so often, you can just call them up or log on and find who you need to know and what you need to know. It's just another thing that improves that communication two way./
4. Again, I have like my kind of weekly and monthly meetings with my immediate team. My line manager has monthly meetings with her line manager, they share information, which gets passed back to us. Again, it stems from the top, you'll find that the chief executive will have meetings with the directors, that would then filter through to their head of service via their monthly and weekly meetings whatever it is, that gets passed on to my line managers, then gets passed back to us and so on and so forth, I pass it on to my colleagues./
5. You know, I've also got, a staff e-bulletin goes out in form of a newspaper and an email./
6. The good thing about that is that it gives us a chance to tell my colleagues what I're doing, so it's not just a case of I're changing this policy so you will have to fill in less forms. I can go to the editor and say, I need to know, I want to invite people to join my mailing list, they can write an article in that, they can post it on the e-bulletin, and it goes out to all of my colleagues. And anybody who wants to join my mailing list can just send me an email and I will add them to the list. That then allows me to communicate with them on a regular basis and tell them all the developments that I've been working on, the events that I've got

coming up, what's going on in the City. So it's that kind of, it's a two-way relationship. /

**Q: So what part of that experience would you consider to be internal marketing?**

7. **P5:** I would say that internal marketing that I have experienced is being based around communication, making sure the staffs know what is going on./
8. The press are very quick to catch on to stories for the Council, and I've had quite perhaps, situations in the past where I found out stuffs that's going on within the City Council via the press, rather than finding out first before it goes to the papers. Which I don't think it's a very good way to find out such information, and also it's a bit demotivating that I can't find out or be told this information before the papers gets hold of it. So the internal marketing that I have experienced is very much kind of based around communication, sorting out that very basic function really./
9. So my experience with internal marketing within the Council so far is being based around that communication element, and knowing and feeling happy that the staff know what they're talking about, and that they're not feeding wrong information to the public, who at the end of the day are my customers./
10. You know, if they're given incorrect information because I lack the general knowledge that I'm supposed to have, then you know, it's kind of negative effect on us really./
11. So my experience of internal market so far is being based around communication and making sure that all staff are fully briefed on their job, you know, knowledge of the organisation and the organisational goals, so I can reflect these when I'm in customer-facing situation./

**Q: Are you then saying internal marketing is what?**

12. **P5:** I think, I don't know the marketing part of it, but I think if you lack internal communication it's very hard to get the other elements right. If staffs don't know they can go on a training course, then they may feel demotivated because they may feel there is no progression where they are. Whereas if you tell them, there is all these resources available to them, you know, they can use that knowledge to help them develop personally and professionally./

## Appendix Eleven

### Excerpts from the transcribed interview protocol for P6

**Q: Can you describe in as much detail as possible a situation in which internal marketing has occurred for you?**

1. **P6:** Based on the trainings I've had through the branch,/  
2. the motivation that's being given to me by management,/  
3. I have reviews in the morning about customers I may see, you know, this is when the branch management sits down with us and review what the customers are coming in for, what I're aiming to do, and what the aims are for the day. So I would go through my daily objectives./
4. I mean this particular day where I didn't have a very strong diary, but then, the management I're saying you know, I've always got a full review, or occasionally you may get a customer who calls back because you've been seeing them before, they may contact you regarding another review. This particular customer had called up on the branch line she actually wanted to see me that day, but, unfortunately because I was quite busy towards the end of the afternoon, having a lot of appointments overlapping, she hadn't actually come through the review in the morning, so it's nothing to say that I couldn't take the customer because she hadn't actually been booked in. The customer was very desperate to come in, I took her in between seeing two other customers./
5. So I was spread across three different rooms at this point. I did feel really, I did have a buzz that day because it was really just motivating helping the customers and it was just coming in, and you know, I was able to help them all./
6. Well, this particular customer did come in, and she says, can I come in at this time, and I said yeah, that's fine, she was really grateful that I've seen her at short notice. I take her into my room with her mother, they always come in together, mother and daughter. And she says, you know, I really appreciate your seeing me, I really need your help, I need to borrow some money. And I says well, I can do that for you now, I could run through an application, but I am actually with two other customers. So in between seeing her and two other customers I've run through the application, you know, I've chatted a little bit about her holidays and things. You know doing the right things, obviously referring it pass my manager, going through all the details of the account, putting forward the application, I were able to help the customer. She couldn't believe how quickly I've done it and managed to actually get her sorted in such a little time. /

7. Again I did ask her to rebook, based on the information that I hadn't complete on that just one review, but you know, she got the result that she came in for, she was so happy, I mean I even got a hug and I got feedback from her. You know, she was just so grateful./
8. The next day when I came into work, she had actually ordered some flowers and some chocolates, and they were delivered by a florist. When I came into the branch and saw them, and thinking oh! where they've come from? And they said, they're yours, and I said so they're mine, I went over it, and looked at them and they were from my customer. And she says she was just so grateful for seeing her at such a short notice, and being able to actually help her. That day it did keep me, my levels quite high, you know spirits quite, you know, just for the fact that I've actually been able to help that customer, she'd really really appreciated the help. So that kind of thing does really keep you motivated./

## Appendix Twelve

### Excerpts from the transcribed interview protocol for P7

**Q: Can you describe in as much detail as possible a situation in which internal marketing has occurred for you?**

1. **P7:** I think what management do. You see there are times when management I believe can turn that person around. OK, I had a lady downstairs who gave a fantastic service, she wasn't bothered about the sales. I actually sat her down, I said to her as a manager, I sat her down one day, did a review on her, spoke to her, and really, built up the positives in what she did. And I think internally, if management can do that, they can turn people around if they probably spend the time, and really looked at that person as an individual. Now this lady, lovely! lady, hardworking, dedicated, but she wasn't achieving. So, I actually talked to her, spent half an hour talking to her, and explained that she was a fantastic! person, personality they say, she gave a great service, she always followed everything through, so why did she not get the sales. Well, her mentality was, the customer seems to complain, the customer is got a problem, they don't want to be sold something. OK I spent some time with her, talking to her and explaining that what if a loan could save that customer money. May be half of her problem was, she had five loans and credit cards, she was paying a little bit here, a little bit there. She couldn't keep up with it. What if I put everything together, gave her one loan, her life became organised, she knew such and such a date, her direct debit went out with a loan, and it was cheaper to do it that way, she would walk out even happier./
2. Now, this lady took it on board, that I spent time with her, explained this to her and also praise for the fact that she can have those customers eating out of her hand, because she gave them an excellent service, and if she gave them excellent service, she can then turn that service around into sales. I think given that member of staff support, making the time for that person, management has got to make time./
3. I think there's got to be organisations where managers don't even speak to their staff, and I hear people saying, they work at places where they never see management, management won't mingle with the staff. I think management gonna get down, actually you've got to get your hands dirty, and live by example. You've got to make time, you've got to value that person, you've got to give them the support. That person is important./

**Q: Are you saying then that internal marketing is what?**

4. **P7:** Internal marketing I would say is support, time, and value./

**Q: Can you describe what you mean by time, value and support?**

5. **P7:** Time, actually, everybody is got a job, management has got their jobs to do, but if you can just pull out a little bit of time, like the example I gave you, half an hour, and you can turn somebody around, that's fine, and you can achieve./
6. Support, is if that person needs help, for example, giving them examples, giving them the tools, may be giving them the training, give that person support, you can turn that person around./
7. Making that person feel valuable, you know, it's a big massive organisation. You know, I're tiny little dots in this organisation, but if management can then just turn it around. I have what I call 'a hurdle' every morning, fifteen minutes. I have a hurdle where my team leader, the cashier's team leader would praise anybody whose done well the day before./
8. The branch managers would say I want you to do this, this and this today, this is what I expect out of today. There are many awards given, there is praise given, there is recognition given for the staff who have worked well. And sometimes when that's done, fifteen minutes before I start work, that person is on a buzz, because they think great! somebody noticed what I did yesterday, they've just mentioned my name in front of twenty people. I've done really well, if you start work with that kind of mind, I think the rest of the day can be successful./

**Q: So how would you describe internal marketing?**

9. **P7:** Recognition, Support, being there for your staff and providing what that individual needs.

**Q: What sort of needs can staffs be provided with?**

10. It may not necessarily be at work, it may be something bothering the member of staff's mind, something that's happening at home./
11. Now, management has got to be human. And I will give you an example of something that happened to myself. Five years ago, I went to buy a house, and, on the day of the exchange, the money coming in to finalise the purchase of this house did not hit the account, and I was about to loose £8,000. I was actually a cashier then, getting off from cashiering, getting into the backroom, phoning the solicitors, getting back, being at work, I'm at work, I should be working, I shouldn't be sorting out my own personal problems. The branch manager at the time came and said to me. He took the time to ask what is the matter? so when I explained to him, and he now said to me, well that's right, pack up the till, go home, and sort this out. You can't be at work, you can't work and trying to sort

that out. You need to go home, and he actually gave me the rest of the day off to go and sort out solicitors, banks and whatever I had to sort out in order to get this house purchased through. Now, to me, that was making the time to ask me, giving me the support which was the time I needed off that day, that was the only day the exchange would have taken place, had it gone over, I think it was 2,0'clock, I would have lost my £8,000, and I would have lost this house. So he took the time, he gave me the support, he made me feel valuable! in the fact that yeah, it's important that I had to be back at work tomorrow, doing your job, but also a happy person. Not in the situation that you are in, I took the rest of the day off, sorted out, got the house, everything went through, and really, I can! never thank that manager enough. May be that makes you work ten times harder, you know, because the manager was there for you. /

## Appendix Thirteen

### Excerpts from the transcribed interview protocol for P8

**Q: Can you describe in as much detail as possible a situation in which internal marketing has occurred for you?**

1. **P8:** I think I use internal marketing all the time, there is no one particular situation, I do it through out my working day, because as a manager you're continuously marketing, getting their targets, observing their motivation. So there are situations where, you know, even is just five minutes praise for that member of staff, because you noticed they've done a fantastic service for a customer or they've done a fantastic business, then as a manager you go an pat them on the back, and say well done! Thank you for that, it was really helpful today. To me that's internal marketing, that means the staff goes away feeling, oh yeah, my efforts are being noticed by the manager./
2. My internal marketing like really starts first thing in the morning with the 'hurdle' because you set your agenda, and you're marketing what you have to do for that day to get the business right. And you know, just a thank you meeting with members of a team, then they know what you expect of them, you're telling them what you need the business to deliver on, and also in that meeting you tell them as well. If I want them to focus on loans for example, I tell them what I're looking for, what sort of customers I need them to get across to. So to me that's internal marketing./
3. In that hurdle, I train lots of individuals as well. So there are lots of courses they can go to, but I think I train them, it can be on their job all the time. So if I know that somebody has done good, or somebody need to have a dialogue and you make sure you have time for them like everybody else. To me then that motivates them./
4. And to me as a branch I're all interdependent, and as a branch this size, there is nobody that is working individually, everybody is a part of that team, and delivers on something that's crucial to that team. If there was a part that somebody was working individually, and wasn't delivering to the target or delivering to the team's aims, then really that job would suffer potentially, because it's really working for that team that is the important part. Everybody has got their individual targets, and what I try and do is make sure that those members of staff, if they're already winning individually, then the team is winning, because all those individual targets are built up to be the team's target. On lots of different areas like service, sales, processing, and to make sure that they can deliver,/
5. what I do is make sure they are empowered to deliver. So they know what their targets are, they know how to do it that they can feel the need to do it, because at the end of the day they're the people doing the jobs, and if they can't, if they're



having problems doing it, then the manager needs to know what the problems are./

6. I talk and I listen, and I take on board what they say, and at the end of the day if there is something I can do to make it better, then I will. Because at the end of the day if they can't do it, there is got to be a problem, so I make sure I analyse it. The bottom line is if they can be empowered, if they're skilled, if they are motivated, you couldn't get a better result from them, because they got to be happy aren't they? and you can't get a much more loyal staff that way./

**Q: Are you then saying that internal marketing is what?**

7. **P8:** For me internal marketing is making sure that your staff are motivated, that they're empowered, that they are trained, and they're skilled and if you get that right, you can sell to them the processes and the way to do it, then you could have a successful result at the end of the line./
8. Because your business can't run without that. The bottom line that's your resources isn't it? that's what you're using to deliver on whatever you think the business is about. Make sure the staff are happy and motivated, if you've got that right then you're half way there, aren't you? Yeah, I think so./